BETWEEN STRUGGLE & FANTASY: QUEER URBAN COMMUNALITY

MASTER THESIS

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Between Struggle & Fantasy:
Queer Urban Communality.

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ABSTRACT

The departure point of the thesis is the public vs. private division of space, which has historically been rooted in the organization of production and reproduction under capitalist urbanization. I want to look at this binary through queer theory and politics, going deeper into the power dynamic of capital and heteronormativity. This means looking not only at the public vs. private, but especially at how it serves as the basis for determining space as valuable.

Queer is used as a critical tool, way of reading the space and revealing heteronormative and other power relations, and also as a lived struggle or activism – attempting to produce space free from gender and sexual constraints. As a way to challenge heteronormativity, queer is also intersectional and deals with "race" and "class" as elements that are used to construct the power hierarchy.

The hypothesis is that space cannot be "queer" or "straight" itself, but it is rather performed as such — or *queered*. It is a continuous negotiation of power, ownership, safety, visibility, etc. within power relation structures. The key questions are the following: how does social reproduction labour enable queering of space, and how does queering deconstruct the capitalist framing of social reproduction in urban space? How does this *labour of care* work as a support system or framework, allowing activism, organization, community building, or other forms of agency of queer bodies in the urban environment, and what is the spatial dimension in facilitating this labour?
Finally, what is the future of queer in the city, and how will it continue to redefine its space, narrative, and futures under neoliberalism?

The applied methods are theoretical studies, case study analysis consisting of interviews and empirical observations, as well as autoethnographic observations. The first part of the thesis opens up key concepts, positions the thesis within the architectural discourse and clarifies the position from which it is written. The second part consist of five essays about *queer urban situations*, which vary from domestic arrangements, through underground clubs organization, to displacements resulting from gentrification.

key words: queer space, LBTQIA+, social reproduction, urban commons, the city, private-public, performativity, gentrification

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FOREWORD

Throughout the process of writing the thesis I have been often asked what has inspired me to choose *this* topic or what has made me think of *those* issues. It has become one of my most dreaded questions. Not only because I was lacking a catchy inspirational story which has put the whole process into motion, but mainly because the issues in question were not only a fascination of a researcher, but also struggles of my everyday life as a queer urban dweller. It has therefore been a very personal process, one that took more emotional labour and vulnerability than I could anticipate.

It took years of hard work to unlearn the responsibility that is put on minorities at all times to explain themselves and their issues to the ones holding privilege. However, I have (perhaps by accident) put myself in a position where it has literally become my job to explain queer stuff to straight people. Not to say that I assume no queers will read this text or that it is specifically targeted towards straights (it's not). It is more that the disciplines of architecture and urbanism generally operate within a heteronormative framework and use heteronormative language.

Writing as activism, which I consider this thesis to be in many ways, is therefore not only hard because of the emotional labour it requires, but even more so because of the need to combine, sometimes separate, but mostly understand the different positions I am working from. On the one hand — the architect/urbanist, responsible for arranging space for others, an objective (if that is even possible) researcher, who is required to deliver a text which will enrich the discourse and be *useful* for the profession. And on the other — the queer urban dweller, who has been struggling for space in the city since ever, pissed off, hopeless and hopefull at the same time, who simultanously experiences the city as a lanscape of queer struggle and liberation, and ultimately as the only imaginable environmet that fully allows to be queer.

In conclusion, there is no way to write this thesis other than to get personal, so I will, after all, start with a catchy personal inspirational story which will prepare the ground for my research questions:

Gothenburg, Summer 2017.

We were waiting at a tram stop in the suburb of Bergsjön in Angered after a long day at work. Together with five other master students I was mentoring high school youth from Angered Gymnasiet on research projects... Anyways, the six of us were deciding where to go for an "after work". I suggested one of my favourite bars, Kelly's. Only one other (fellow queer) person knew which bar exactly I am refering to. A quick, but curious exchange followed with one of the colleagues who did not know:

Colleague: Which one is Kelly's?
Me: The one a bit further on Andra [Andra långgatan], with vegan pizza.
Colleague: Mhmm…
Me: You know, the gay bar!
Colleague: [In extremely serious, slightly patronizing tone] Well, I didn't know it was a gay bar, it dosen't matter to me if it is a gay or a straight bar. It should not matter… [or something along those lines].

The tone and content of my colleagues statement —who, at this point it might be worth mentioning, was a cisgender, heterosexual man— was suggesting that he read my remark as somehow inappropiate, that I unnecessarily stress the fact that something is "gay". He wanted to very clearly underline that he does not see "straight" or "gay" because it should not matter.
I did not respond to that, as it was one of these days when I told myself it is not my job to explain "queer stuff" to straights. If I was to respond however, it would probably be something like "well, of course it does not matter to you because you are a cishet man, but I am queer and it means a lot to me."

And here comes the departure point of my thesis; What is this queer space that I, and it is safe to say so many other queers care about? And why is it so important?

To be completly honest I am not sure if *Kelly's* is officially a queer bar. I never bothered to investigate it properly until now and I could not find any confirmation of that online. It was refered to as a such within the queer circles I was interacting with. So why was *Kelly's* unofficialy chosen as the most queer bar on *Andralång*? What was so attractive about being there? Perhaps the feeling of safety or possibility of meeting other queers. Possibility of chats, flirts or simply being surrounded by them and, for once, not feel like the minority. Or maybe the owner was queer, or the previous owner, or the bar which was there before?

Investigation of that could reveal some part of Gothenburg's queer history, but what I find most interesting about this situation is that, for whatever reason, without an explicit statement *Kelly's* perpetuated the collective consciousness of local queers. And probably (hopefully) it will imprint itself in the city's collective queer memory.

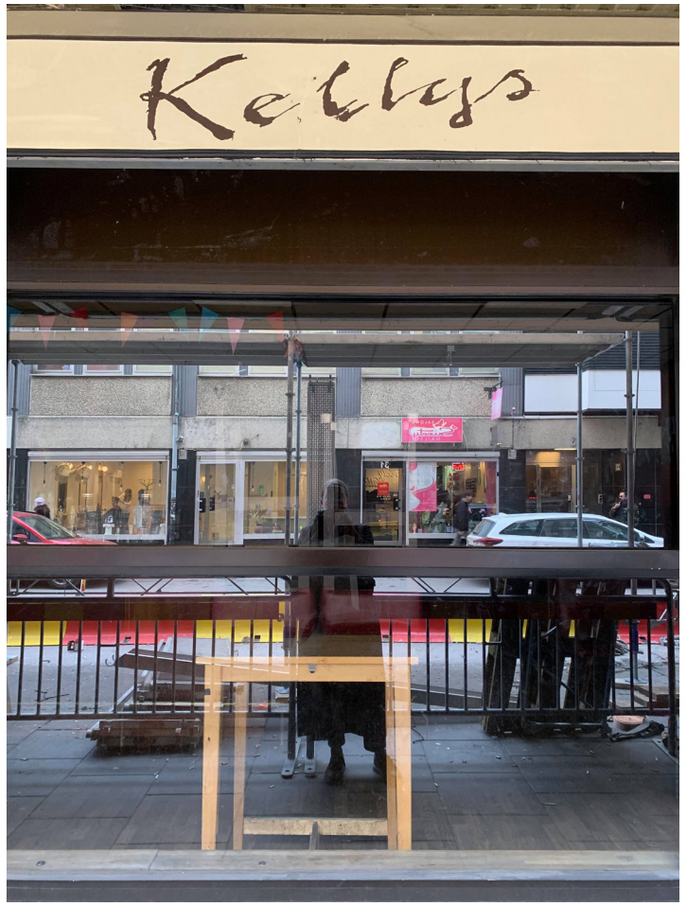

Fig.1. Kelly's Bar, Gothenburg, 2020.
Photo by my lovely friend Louise Karlsson

HETEROGLOSSARY

Basic concepts

The foreword already brought up some terms that perhaps need clarification in order to underline the position from which this thesis is written. Following one of Hélène Frichots *feminist design power tools*[1], I decided to explain the basic concepts used in the thesis that are usually not used in texts about architecture and urbanism in a form of *heteroglossary.* That is a sort of lexicon of different (hetero) (re)definitions that best describe my understanding of an often loaded term.

Gender is understood as a social category. On one hand loaded with norms and expectations of someone's behaviour based on a binary, biological traditional understanding, on the other it is a flexible and evolving part of one's self.

Performativity of gender as defined by Butler, is the notion that gender is created through sustained social acts, mostly unconscious ones, which can both strengthen or subvert the norm.[2] In short: doing instead of being. Categories such a woman or heterosexual are not some universal givens, but rather inscribed on the body and socialy constructed trough performative acts, which are reinforced by laws, words, rituals, clothing or production of artifacts. A performance appears on an individual level, but performativity can be understood as structural. The notion of performativity of gender is that we are made to become "man" or "woman" in and through social acts.

Cisgenderism is the unity of gender assigned to someone at birth and the gender one identifies with.

Heteronormativity, following Judith Butler is a system of social norms that works to normalize behaviors and social expectations tied to heterosexuality. In this system, heterosexuality, but also cisgenderism and monogamy are the "normal" state of the human being. The invisible norm(s) define everybody as heterosexual, cisgender, monogamous, etc. until proven otherwise. Heteronormativity promotes a strict gender binary and gender roles according to which every person in society should act or perform.

1 Hélène Frichot, "How to make yourself a Feminist Design Power Tool", (Baunach: Spurbuchverlag, 2016).

2 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York & London: Routledge, 1999), 192.

Female+feminine+atracted to male and male+masculine+atracted to female are the associations that make the system of heteronormativity work (what Butler framed as the heterosexual matrix). Butler points out that repetition makes a norm seem natural, a given truth – *"norm acquires its durability through being reinstated time and again. Thus, a norm does not have to be static in order to last; in fact, it cannot be static if it is to last."*[3] The system of heterosexuality is unstable and needs to be reproduced through performative actions constantly. Heteronormativity therefore actively works to erase or condemn identities, behaviors, and experiences that do not fit into its gender-assigned roles.[4] Heteronormativity is a system that works with strict binaries, as man/woman or heterosexual/homosexual.

Queer is a reclaimed pejorative used to describe gays and lesbians in the 1980's. Since then, it has often been used as an umbrella term to collectively describe different sexualities and sexual identities as well as an identity in itself. It, however, also gained a much more politicized meaning through queer theory, politics, and activisms. Therefore, simply put, I use *queer, queerness* and *queering* as terms to describe critiques, activisms and struggles of the collective body or entity that challenges heteronormativity.

I do not, however, read *queer* as a direct opposition to heteronormativity as creating a theoretical (or fictional) opposition of queer vs. heteronormative or queer vs. straight would be counterproductive to one of the main heteronormative fictions *queer* challenges, namely the binary categorization. While *queer* resists binaries, it does not operate beyond enforced normativities. Foucault suggests *"where there is power, there is resistance"*[5] and this resistance is embodied in the power structures. It is not generated from an exterior position to power relations but rather from within. Therefore if queer is in a way a resistance to heteronormativity it is constructed (as theory or embodied by individuals) within a heteronormative system.
Further, Natalie Oswin points out that *"no individual that lives in the social world is free-floating or disembodied. (...) As are all binaries, the binary division of fluidity or rigidity is a fiction that is more productively*

3 Judith Butler, "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?", *Differences* no 13.1 (2002):37.

4 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 185-193.

5 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*. trans. Robert Hurley. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 95.

deconstructed than embraced."[6] Therefore, while queer is not synonymous with LGBTQIA+, neither is it free-floating and completely fluid, beyond normativity. Instead, as Eve Sedgwick unpacks, it rather "transverses" or is "across". *"Queerness reacts to heteronormative culture, desire, and structure by using its own languages to critique and expand on the potential embedded in that culture."*[7] In other words queerness is relational and reveals the power dynamic of the context it reacts to.

Social reproduction has been usually defined as:
"(a) biological reproduction of the species, and the conditions and social constructions of motherhood;
(b) the reproduction of the labour force which involves subsistence, education and training; and
(c) the reproduction and provisioning of caring needs that may be wholly privatised within families and kinship networks or socialised to some degree through state support."[8]
Although these themes intersect in many ways, I mainly look at social reproduction from the last perspective — as broadly understood labor of care. The definition above, however, uses a binary separation of "privatised within family relations" and "socialised via state", which is an inaccurate simplification since it excludes the whole spectrum of care labor performed in the neighborhood, communal, and community scale. Moreover, the majority of this labour is performed through women's and minorities neighbourhood associations and informal collectives.

A commonly cited example of this are the voluntarily set up kitchens – ola communes, in some of Latin American countries as a response to the economic crises of the 1970s, 80s and 90s. While discussing the communal kitchens in Lima, Anna Puigjaner frames them as "*radical systems that blur not only the established limits between private and public, between family structures and domestic roles, between labor and housekeeping, between female and male roles… but that also act as a place for neighborhood management in a way that is connected directly with municipal and larger*

6 Natalie Oswin, "Critical geographies and the uses of sexuality: Deconstructing queer space." *Progress in Human Geography* Vol. 32, Issue 1, (February 2008):92.

7 Jaffer Kolb, "Working Queer," LOG magazine, no 41 (Fall 2017):63.

8 Isabella Bakker, "Social Reproduction and the Constitution of a Gendered Political Economy.", *New Political Economy* Vol. 12, No. 4, (December 2007):541.

political institutions."[9] The kitchens gave social and political visibility to women who were otherwise excluded to the domestic sphere; these kitchens were a means for accessing education, support, income etc. This externalization of domestic space, as Puigjaner calls it was also an externalization of social reproduction politics.
In his call for the "queering of social reproduction", Max Andrucki recalls the case of San Francisco's neighborhood Castro and how its queer community dealt with the AIDS crisis of the 80s through performing social reproduction labor on a nearly city scale.[10] He thinks of queer organizing and different forms of providing care, medical aid and information, and emotional support centers not just as politics, but as labour – as the *"public forms of social reproduction, the infinite acts of equally gendered mostly, though not always, unpaid labor that make cities run"*.[11] In Andrucki's analysis social reproduction labour is understood on the city scale, and as performed by different genders.

Emotional labour is the unpaid, invisible labour of managing or regulating one's emotions as well as considering the emotions of others in order to fulfill a job.

Intersectional perspective. As Kimberlé Crenshaw[12] underlines, it is impossible to separate the gender and sexual power structure from its racialized dimensions, its colonial history and contemporary geopolitical relations.
It is thus crucial to adopt an intersectional perspective, which considers the overlaying power structures and how they affect each other. It is a way to map out and orient within the landscape(s) of power.

9 Anna Puigjaner, "Bringing the Kitchen Out of the House", *e-flux Architecture*, https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/overgrowth/221624/bringing-the-kitchen-out-of-the-house/ Accessed 12 January 2019

10 Max Andrucki, "Queering Social Reproduction, or, How Queers Save the City." *Society & Space'* forum on social reproduction. (October 2017).

11 Max Andrucki, "Queering Social Reproduction, or, How Queers Save the City."

12 Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color." *Stanford Law Review* 43(6), (1991):1241–1299.

INTRODUCTION

Safety – Agency – *Right to the City*

When we think about the spatial dimension of gender equality, often the first and biggest discussed issue is safety. Both in queer and feminist approaches, the safety of female, femme, black, queer, trans, migrant, etc. bodies in space is a basic, but often in reality not fulfilled, claim. Some neighborhoods, streets or places are of course safer than others in terms of actual crime, but tackling the issue of safety from a design perspective usually revolves around the question of the *feeling of safety*, which can mean very different things to different people.

One of the almost universally praised remedies for unsafe neighborhoods, both in terms of the personal feeling of safety as well as crime prevention, is the facilitation of different forms of local, social control or as Jane Jacobs described it in her iconic *Death and Life of Great American Cities*[1] — "eyes on the street". For Jacobs, "eyes on the street" simply mean the presence of (preferably) locals watching over a certain space either from the street itself or from behind shop or home windows. The starring neighborhood of Jacobs' novel – New York's West Village – also happens to be probably the world's most famous gayborhood. Analyzing the situation of the area from an intersectional queer perspective[2] geographer Johan Andersson argues that Jacobs' beloved notion of natural surveillance is quite problematic in the modern context of West Village. In this, or perhaps in every case, it is particular "eyes" that surveil, judge, and have the structural power to suppress what they find dangerous. He pointed out how both straight, nimby (not in my backyard) groups as well as upper middle class white gay men's eyes on the street erase the younger, poorer, trans-er, blacker, and browner bodies from urban space and, in this case, from a "queer space"[3]. Those privileged, civic, surveilling eyes have a direct influence on the police patrol of the area. In this case, the police read transwomen of color as prostitutes, which then obviously created an unsafe situation for the women. Jacobs' tool for creating a livable, citizen-driven (or monitored?) city became an enabler of racist, classist, and transphobic oppression.

1 Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, New York; Random House, 1961.

2 Johan Andersson "*Wilding* in the West Village: Queer space, racism and Jane Jacobs hagiography." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* Vol. 39, Issue 2, (March 2015): 265-283.

3 By "queer space" here I spaces which the LGBTQ+ communities claim, inhabit, or which are historically important them.

In the spring of 2017, in the role of a "queer activist-architect-researcher", I attended a meeting of a gay youth club in a local high school in Angered, a suburban district in the northeast of Gothenburg, which is stigmatized as problematic by the mainstream press, but admired for its local culture and communality by more leftist actors. While discussing the issue of the feeling of safety in public spaces, the youth, which mostly consisted of lesbians with an African background, expressed that the presence of a relative, neighbor, or someone who potentially could know their families, came with a risk of outing. This meant that they had to "act straight" in the public spaces of their neighborhood (in addition to doing that in private) and that their feeling of safety or comfort was often actually higher in places that were more anonymous. This calls the quite common desire for creating tight communities "where everyone knows each other" into question. One could read that behind the feeling of being unsafe expressed by the youth was the hopeless feeling of lack of agency. They preferred the unknown of the city center, where, in their view, everyone was equal and (to some extent) free to behave the way they wanted, rather than the tight community of their neighborhood, which was unofficially, but practically, governed by the patriarchal, heteronormative lifestyle of the people who held the highest social status.

In both Angered and West Village, social control in the form of local eyes on the street erased and threatened queers in (or out of) space. In both of these cases, their feeling of safety was compromised by the presence of a hierarchical power structure and their lack of agency within.

What happens when queers have the leading agency over space? To take a local example, I want to look at how a safer space was constructed during the recurring underground drag event in Helsinki — *Nights of Jaahas*. I use "safer space" instead of "safe space" as no one can really declare a space safe for anyone other than themself. Not only is safety dependent on complex relations of power and lived traumas or experiences, it is also easily shifted. Even though, in reality, safety is unachievable for many, especially marginalized bodies, the concept of "safe space" has almost become mainstream — think safe space disclaimers in business or academic settings, or a "come as you are" in an event ad. Often the construction of a "safe space"

goes no further than this note or disclaimer and is not followed by any concrete action or even an effort to understand what could actually be or feel unsafe. Instead, the idea behind a "safer space" is that safety in space is continuously negotiated. Guidelines have to be revisited and adjusted all the time. It is not just about a list of rules, but is rather a holistic approach and concrete actions that put those guidelines in place.

Going beyond merely an empty "come as you are" note somewhere, the *Nights of Jaahas* took over the narrative of the Lepakkomies bars' basement and rewrote its rules. Everyone who enters the club is given a list of rules of the "safer space". The emphasis is clearly on consent and the autonomy of every*body*, and different forms of harassment or breaking consent are explicitly listed. On the event page beforehand, there is clear information on the accessibility of the venue and available assistance, which is also specifically made available. The accessibility also extends to gender-neutral bathrooms and economical accessibility in the form of flexible entrance-fee (a minimal fee at the door and voluntary tips for the performers). Emotional well-being and safety are addressed by including trigger warnings for performances that deal issues like mental illness or abuse in the program for the night, which is distributed throughout the venue. Additionally, at the beginning of the performance, the host points out to the "safety group", which is usually 2-3 people responsible for addressing any unsafe or tricky situations. A person experiencing anything that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable can ask a member of the safety group to step in.

Creating a safer space involves huge amounts of emotional labor and being informed of, and sensitive to, the nuanced ways spaces can be and feel unsafe. It is less about doing things in or to a space and more about undoing things that are already coded in a space, in this case, in the space of a bar basement. While those actions certainly establish an atmosphere of respect and caring during an evening contained in a club, it is rather hard to imagine applying them to a bigger and more public scale like a street, for example. They could, however, be applicable to a myriad of public buildings, buildings with public functions like schools, museums, healthcare centres, police stations, or any other quasi-public spaces of shopping centres, etc. When it comes to safety in public spaces the dilemma is, as pointed out by Ann Forsyth, counteracting the increasing regulation of public spaces (privatization of public space),

and at the same time protecting the marginalized from harassment through some form of regulation.[4] It is a dilemma that is strongly rooted in the private/public space binary and the issue of ownership of the space. Harassment or oppression in private and public spaces are not detached or happen separately, rather they emerge from complex power relation structures which transcends such binaries. To address it would mean to navigate various intersecting systems of oppression and their spatial deployments.

The key problem seems to be who has the agency over space and how informed are they about navigating those power relations. To what degree is it even an issue of architecture, planning and to which that of politics? However, following Leslie Weisman:

> *"the spatial arrangements of buildings and communities are neither value-free nor neutral; they reflect and reinforce the nature of each society's gender, race and class relations."*[5]

The build environment does have an effect on us and the way we live, but we also alter our environments to fit our needs. As Éloise Choquette notes, *"Architects forget the agency of people to transform space and architecture."*[6] Paying closer attention to this vernacular transformations can better inform our planning decisions.

4 Ann Forsyth, "Sexuality and Space: Nonconformist Populations and Planning Practice", *Journal of Planning Literature*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (February 2001):353.

5 Leslie Weisman, "Architecture". In *Encyclopaedia of women. Global women's issues and knowledge*, edited by Ch. Kramarae & D. Spender (Routledge, London, 2000):86.

6 Éloise Choquette, "Queering Architecture: (Un)Making Places." *The Site Magazine* (July 26, 2018). https://www.thesitemagazine.com/read/queering-architecture

Aim & Research Questions

This thesis is written with the understanding that architecture is political, not just an empty vessel, functionally or esthetically organizing space. Rather, the ways we as architects, planners, etc. organize space is informed by and simultaneously informs power relations.
Within different activist movements, which address the spatial deployments of inequality, the right to the city is understood not only as safety and access to or redistribution of urban resources but the right to project an image of the city — the ability to collectively(!) reshape the urban environment.[7]
The aim of the thesis is to explore this from a queer perspective. This means analyzing or projecting a queer image of the city. As Lefebvre notes,

> *"we should have to study not only the history of space, but also the history of representations, along with that of their relationships – with each other, with practice, and with ideology"*[8]

Further, this brings the issue of the errasure of queer urban history, or *queerstory*, and the bigger questions of who has the ownership of urban history? and how history is captured in architecture or built environment?
Through silmuntaneosly analyzing queer urban struggles as well as queer fantasies about the city the thesis explores queers' potential in the — necessary for an equal right to the city — undoing of the (historically), spatially encoded oppressions under patriarchal-capitalism.

The starting point is the public vs. private division of space, which has long been analyzed within feminist discourse, and the way it is linked to how capitalist urbanization organizes production and reproduction as well as how it values reproduction, social reproduction, and emotional labor in general. I want to look at this binary through queer theory and politics, going deeper into the power dynamic of capital and heteronormativity specifically. This means looking not only at the public vs. private, but especially considering how it gives the basis for determining space as valuable, creating an intersecting binary of productive vs. non-productive space. Undoing the spatially encoded oppression starts with challenging how the value of space is framed. As

7 David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. (London: Verso, 2013), 4.

8 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011): 42.

queer challenges binary structures, examining the idea of "queer space" helps unpack the binaries with which urban planning operates.

The hypothesis is that space cannot be "queer" or "straight" itself, but it is rather performed or produce as such — queered. It is a continuous negotiation of power, ownership, safety, visibility, etc. within power relation structures. The key questions are the following: how does social reproduction labor enable the queering of space, and how does queering deconstruct the capitalist framing of social reproduction in urban space? How does this labour of care work as a support system or framework, allowing activism, organization, community building, or other forms of agency of queer bodies in the urban environment, and what is the spatial dimension in facilitating this labor?

Finally, what is the future of queer in the city; how will it continue to redefine its space, narrative, and futures under neoliberalism? Above all, I want to explore how queerness – as a complex, perhaps not fully definable entity of critical theory, activism and lived struggle – is transforming the urban landscape.

KEY CONCEPTS

Queer & Space

What happens when we put “queer” and “space” together?

Different understandings of “queer space” have emerged mainly from geography studies since the 90s. Studies has shifted from approaches focusing on physical manifestations of LGBTQIA+ territory as oppositional to heteronormative territory, to a focus on a more abstract sexualization of space, with the most well-known *Queer Space* by Aaron Betsky.[1] These approaches have been rightfully criticized for creating a problematic binary of queer and non-queer space and suggesting that queer space can only exist within a gay enclave.[2] However, the concept of “queer space” have been almost exclusively placed within urbanized context. The *promise of the city* — the one of progressiveness, freedom and sometimes escape — has been a major reason for queer migration.[3] Different typologies of spaces have been especially analyzed in a queer context. Spaces like public bathrooms, bathhouses, parks, bars, saunas, cultural centres and housing as well as neighbourhoods (or *gaybourhoods*) as a whole.

Ann Forsyth writes: *“The literature on gays and public space has focused on three main issues: harassment, protest, and the place of public affection or public eroticism.”*[4] The use of “gays” instead of LGBTQIA+ or queer, is not coincidental since it is particularly the public eroticisism and sex of gay men in parks, bath houses, and restrooms that has been covered in literature on queers and public space. This is, on one hand, due to the marginalization of lesbian, trans, and other identities within such literature as well as the reproduction of rasist and classist dinamics within the “gay culture”. As Jasbir Puar notes:

> “*While it is predictable that the claiming of queer space is lauded as the disruption of heterosexual space, rarely is that disruption interrogated*

1 Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space and Same-Sex Desire* (New York: William Morrow, 1997).

2 Olivier Vallerand, “Home Is the Place We All Share”, *Journal of Architectural Education* 67:1, (2013):65.

3 Jasbir Puar, “A transnational feminist critique of queer tourism.” *Antipode* 34, (November 2002):936.

4 Ann Forsyth, “Sexuality and Space...”, 353.

also as a disruption of racialized, gendered, and classed spaces"[5]

Public display of eroticism or different cruising practices have gained the status of a subversive act of reclaiming public spaces; however, factors like its cis-male dominated character, the fetishization of cruising culture by straight pop culture, and its digitalization through dating apps have perhaps undermined or exhausted its subversive potential. Furthermore, the digitalization of cruising culture through apps like grindr potentially moves public eroticism from neglected spots of the cities into private spaces of high-end apartments. As Andres Jaque notes in his piece on "Grindr Archiurbanism" Grindr's interface prioritizes one on one meetings over social gatherings which happened in cruising sites. With that and the normalization of LGBTQIA+ lifestyles in Western countries those historical cruising sites lost their role of accommodating the margins and are often becoming attractive sites for real-estate investments.[6]

While evaluating the role and meaning of planning in regards to the LGBTQIA+ population's urban living patterns, Ann Forsyth acknowledged the planner's role in preserving the queer urban history. She points out how the sites of historic significance to the queer community from the 50s and 60s become eligible for listings as historical sites and therefore can be protected.[7]

In recent years there has been more inclusion of trans peoples issues in architecture and urban discussions; such as in the works of Petra Doan[8] or Joel Sanders and Susan Stryker's "Stalled."[9]

In his introduction to Log's magazine special section *Working Queer*, Jaffer Kolb points out the constantly ongoing transformation of "queer form" and the appropriation (of queer) by mainstream culture that *"has made things*

5 Jasbir Puar, "A transnational feminist critique of queer tourism.", 936.

6 Andres Jaque, "Grindr Archiurbanism", *LOG* 41, (Fall 2017):79.

7 Ann Forsyth, "Sexuality and Space...", 340.

8 See for example Petra L. Doan, "Beyond Queer Space: Planning for Diverse and Dispersed Lgbtq Populations." In *Planning and Lgbtq Communities: The Need for Inclusive Queer Spaces*. Edited by Petra L. Doan. (New York & London: Routledge, 2015).

9 Joel Sanders, "Stalled!: Transforming Public Restrooms." *FOOTPRINT* 21, (december 2017): 109-118. Accessed 11 December 2018. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7480/footprint.11.2.1904.

that were queer probably no longer queer"[10], at the same time pushing queer to take on new forms:

> *"If queerness constantly adapts, then we might understand it more as a 'how' than a 'what'"*[11]

Similarly, Oswin uses queer reading or critique as a tool. Instead of "queer space", she talks about the queer approach to space. She stresses that the core of queer analysis is the formations of sexuality in relation to other power relations. She argues for dismissing "t*he presumption that queer theory offers only a focus on 'queer' lives and an abstract critique of the heterosexualization of space"*[12] in favor of deconstructing binaries and positioning "*sexuality within multifaceted constellations of power."*
She points out that this approach makes it possible for much broader applications of queer theory like for issues of *"transnational labour flows, diaspora, immigration, public health, globalization, domesticity, geopolitics and poverty."* Oswin also challenges the assumptions that *"homosexualities are always and everywhere 'alternative' and heterosexualities as always and everywhere 'dominant'."*[13] and shifts the focus to hetero- and homo-normativities instead. Where homonormativity is a politics or system of norms *"that does not challenge heterosexist institutions and values, but rather upholds, sustains, and seeks inclusion within them."*[14] Further, following Lisa Duggan, homonormativity presents a promise of *"the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption."*[15] The focus of homonormative politics is then to equalize gay and lesbian families with heterosexual ones through legalizing gay marriage and child adoption for same-sex couples. Homonormativity also operates with binary categorizations of queer people such as the assimilated gay married couple vs. the lonely cruising gay.

10 Jaffer Kolb, "Working Queer", 63.

11 Ibid.

12 Natalie Oswin, "Critical geographies and the uses of sexuality...", 100.

13 Ibid., 98.

14 Lisa Duggan, *The twilight of equality: Neoliberalism, cultural politics and the attack on democracy* (New York:Beacon, 2003):50.

15 Ibid.

Any attempt of navigating those hetero- and homo- normativities would have to further recede from the idea of "queer space" as a fixed spatiality, and instead adapt the logic of *queering of space* as continuously produced or performed.

One way to look at the queer "how" of space is through queering the ontology of architecture. Tim Gough talks about the categories framing architecture — building/architecture, everyday/exemplary, subject/object and form/meaning[16] — the normative, binary categories with which architecture operates:

> *"Architecture is caught within (...) normative categories; it is made to fit within what Deleuze calls the 'binary machine' of categorisation or the strata of thought. This binary machine operates by splitting every question and every ontology into a radical (i.e. root-like) question, a question of roots and branches, a tree-like structure composed of a series or sieve of binary distinctions into which the matter at hand – here, architecture, there gender – is forced."*[17]

Gough talks about "transing" architecture and that its task would be to queer the binary machine. This "transing" would position architecture mixed across categories, instead of being defined or evaluated through them. Gough's queered ontology of architecture deals with difference and relations, not with the terms of relations. Once again, it is the how instead of the what; what architecture does or how architecture does/is instead of what it is. He sees architecture as a question of differences:

> *"(...) architecture therefore becomes (is seen and understood as) the event of those differences, the constant movement of the multiplicity, and the task of the transing architect is to respect this anti-essentialism/ anti-formalism/anti-typology and return therefore to a location where differences play a more productive role"*[18]

16 Tim Gough, "Trans-architecture." *FOOTPRINT* 21, (december 2017):53.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 56.

Queering challenges the idea that space can be analyzed or designed without considering one's identity and its influence on the usage of space. However, it is not about identity per se, but the relations constructing multiple identities in space. Context is thus essential in shaping subjective experiences of space. The context is then *"defined by when and how space is encountered, through which earlier experiences, and by whom, taking into account issues of gender, race, class, and sexuality."*[19] Therefore, the understanding of one's identity in relation to architecture is not just as the pre-existing condition of one experiencing (or designing) the space, but as something simultaneously shaped through the use of space.

Queer is not so much of an adjective describing certain spaces, but more, as Ivan L. Munuera has put it, *"a verb that performs."*[20]; opening up a different way of *doing*, or more likely – to paraphrase Butler – *undoing* space.

19 Olivier Vallerand, "Home Is the Place We All Share", 65.

20 Ivan L. Munuera, "An Organism of Hedonistic Pleasures: The Palladium", *LOG* 41, (Fall 2017): 103-112.

Production & Performativity (of space)

Queering has the ability to reveal power dynamics and help us realize that *"space is not naturally authentically "straight" but rather actively produced and (hetero)sexualized"*[21] or produced as heterosexual and further as white, male, etc. As we learn from Lefebvre, space is simultaneously a product and a producer of social relations.[22] His analysis of space is critical of the "image" or representations of space (the static façades), instead calling for the restoration of concern for the body, the lived experience, and the urban environment as the location for this experience.[23] The space restricts and enables social practice and is simultaneously produced by it. This opens the opportunity to appropriate space or disrupt the existing order. Several scholars suggested using Lefebvre's productive view of space alongside Butler's analysis of identity as performative. Deirdre Conlon suggests following parallel:

> *"Each theorist proposes that institutional knowledge, or alternatively, in the terms proffered by Lefebvre and Butler respectively: 'representations of space/discourses', constrain the gendered/sexed production of the social spaces of everyday life and operate to produce 'concrete abstractions/the citation of norms'. (...) In this sense space and identity, as well as representation and discourse, are mutually constituted and our productive bodies constitute performative spaces. "*[24]

However, as Conlon further notes, it is not that we just re-produce or re-enact institutional knowledge in our everyday life. The production and performativity of social spaces "*offer the possibility for 'moments of "truth"/ subversive acts', wherein space and sexuality can be done differently."*[25] Derek Gregory further notes the performance of space itself as action cannot be

21 Jon Binnie 1997, quoted in Natalie Oswin, "Critical geographies and the uses of sexuality: Deconstructing queer space." *Progress in Human Geography* Vol. 32, Issue 1, (February 2008): 90.

22 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

23 Intro to "Henri Lefebvre", in Neil Leach, *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory.* (London: Routledge, 1997): 132.

24 Deirdre Conlon, "Productive Bodies, Performative Spaces: Everyday Life in Christopher Park", *Sexualities* 7, no. 4 (November 2004): 464-65.

25 Ibid.

detached from the space through which it is achieved.[26] Furthermore, Butlers concepts of "alliances"[27] as well as (built on Hannah Arendt's theory) "space of appearance" help to ground performativity in space and better understand the role of *the body* in producing space.[28]

Outside of kinship, bodies "*sometimes find themselves unexpectedly allied with one another in a bid to persist and exercise forms of freedom that overcome narrow versions of individualism without being collapsed into compulsory forms of collectivism.*"[29] Butler understands alliances as "*living set of relations*"[30] rather than physical entities. They may happen when bodies gather in space but are not dependent on the presence of bodies in space – *"In some cases, entering a space (i.e. walking into the street) means possibly exposing oneself to violence or harassment. This individual bodily act only becomes possible because of an alliance that exceeds both the single body and the space in question."*[31] However the condition for an alliance to happen between bodies is that they are in some way seen by one another. This act of mutual recognition takes place in the spaces of appearance.

While Arendt's spaces of appearance are established and set conditions of appearance, Butler points to the twofold process of on one hand appearances being conditioned by the spaces of appearance, and on the other the spaces being produced or transformed by the appearances.

When discussing the space of demonstrations, Butler notes *"the very public character of the space is being disputed and even fought over when these crowds gather."*[32] The public space where the demonstration takes place is not a given, according to Butler, but instead is produced through the act of demonstrating, or forming alliance, itself. Even though there are material conditions that pre-exist, this materiality is also "collected", animated, and

26 Derek Gregory, 'Tahrir: Politics, Publics and Performances of Space', *Middle East Critique* 22, no.3 (2013): 235–46.

27 Judith Butler, *Notes on a Performative Theory of Assembly*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015):70.

28 Xenia Kokula, "Opening Bodyspace...", 18.

29 Judith Butler, *Notes on a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 42.

30 Ibid., 72.

31 Xenia Kokula, "Opening Bodyspace...", 17.

32 Judith Butler, "Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street", EIPCP European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies (September 2011) http://eipcp.net/transversal/1011/butler/en.

organized.

> *"As much as we must insist on there being material conditions for public assembly and public speech, we have also to ask how it is that assembly and speech reconfigure the materiality of public space, and produce, or reproduce, the public character of that material environment."*[33]

Xenia Koukula points out how the possibility of forming and actively pursuing alliances acts as an enabler for vulnerable bodies to enter and transform space.[34] Alliances shift focus from the individual body to sets of various relationships. As Butler notes the space of appearance is not established by a single body, but is a performative action that happens *between* bodies. In that sense political action emerges from the *between.*[35]

One way to even further "spatialize" performativity would be through Katarina Bonnevier *enactments* — which explore the performative force of architecture, through the study of the entanglement of actors, acts and architecture.[36]

> *"Firstly, I use the term enactment very close to the word staging, to exhibit or present on or as if on a stage. Apart from directing the actors, staging also includes the set, the lighting, the costumes, the props, the masks and so on. Secondly, enactment can also be synonymous with act, to represent or perform through action – for example when dramatically representing a character on stage by speech, action and gesture. The term enactment includes the act and brings into play the interconnectedness of material container, the setting, the deeds and the actors. Thirdly, an enactment is a performance which is also a command or regulation, for instance the passing of a law by a legislative body. It emphasizes the performative force that the term staging does not evoke."*[37]

33 Judith Butler, "Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street".

34 Xenia Kokula, "Opening Bodyspace....", 19.

35 Judith Butler, "Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street".

36 Katarina Bonnevier, *Behind Straight Curtains*, *Towards a Queer Feminist Theory of Architecture.* (Stockholm: Axl Books, 2007), 15.

37 Ibid., 16.

When describing the boudoir of Eileen Gray's E.1027 villa in France, Bonnevier writes *"No simple norm decides what kind of space this is. That which is being performed in the space, with the help of the architecture, decides what space it is."*[38] What she means is that by making the traditionally private but also feminine[39] space of the house the most public, Gray opens up the space for multiplicity of situations or performances – In Bonneviers queer reading of E.1027, Gray's variety of tactics free the house from the rigid norms and genderings assigned to spaces of the house. Gray calls the house "un organisme vivant", an organism with embodied motion, flexibility, movable walls, hidden parts – in Bonneviers words, a house that calls for a performer. "*building as an act is ambiguous, open to interpretation, not confined within normative constraints.*"[40] The crucial element of sustaining a norm – repetition – is being subverted. E.1027 takes place within a given frame of what a house is, but, due to inexact repetition of the naturalized principles of a house, it manages to develop something new. And perhaps something which puts those principles into question.

The architect of E.1027, Eileen Gray was a frequent guest at the salon of Natalie Barney on 20 rue Jacob in Paris[41]. The salon was often a place for women to shape public discussion, although it was only accessible to women who were privileged in their social status. Furthermore, it was as enactment of a personal theatre: *"props and backdrops, and the enactments – dialogs, flirts, readings, portrayals, tableaux vivants – are woven together by the participants' engagement in a moment in time. It is a performative architecture achieved through bodies and walls, conversations and costumes, furniture and intrigues."*[42] Even though the salon takes place in a private space, it is a part of the public sphere.

38 Katarina Bonnevier, "A queer analysis of Eileen Gray's E.1027" In *Negotiating Domesticity : Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, edited by Hilde Heynen and Gulsum Baydar, 162-180. (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 166.

39 Bonniever points out how the boudoir is historically the first domestic space dedicated only to female use.

40 Katarina Bonnevier, "A queer analysis of Eileen Gray's E.1027", 166.

41 The salon of Natalie Barney was a famous gathering for women and especially queer women in Paris between 1909-1968.

42 Katarina Bonnevier, "A queer analysis of Eileen Gray's E.1027", 174.

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Fig.2. View of the living room of E.1027
source: Katarina Bonnevier,
"A queer analysis of Eileen Gray's E.1027"

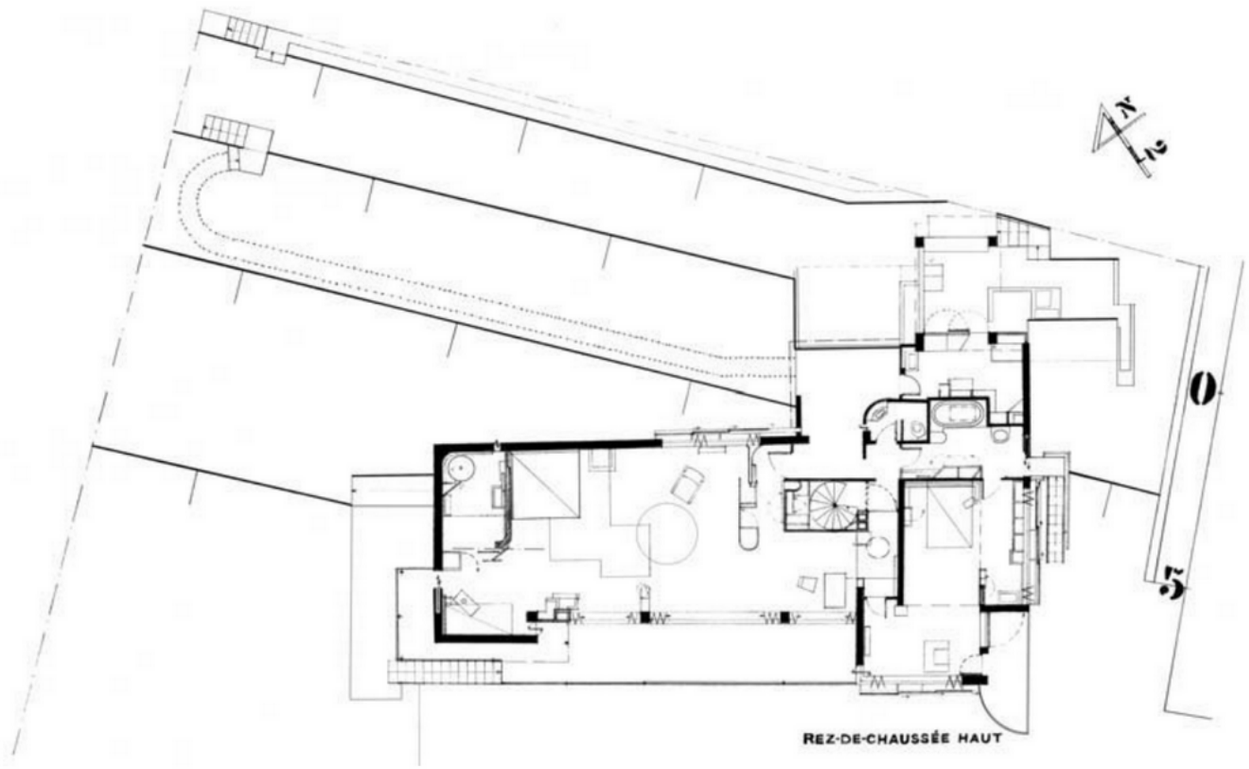

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Fig.3. floor plan of E.1027
source: Katarina Bonnevier,
"A queer analysis of Eileen Gray's E.1027"

Swedish collective MYCKET (which Bonnevier is part of) works a lot with and through performativity, enactment and staging in a queer context. One of their projects specifically aiming to queer the streets of the city (in this case Gothenburg) and bring to light hidden/forgotten queer narratibes was the project *Exclude Me In*.

Exclude Me In was a carnival reenactment for the 2013 GIBCA; Gothenburg International Biennal for Contemporary Art. The original carnival – *Göteborgskarnevalen* – took place in Gothenburg from the 1980s to early 1990s. It was a grassroot initiative connected to the city's illegal club scene and was never part of the formal history of Gothenburg. However, as MYCKET notes *Exclude Me In* was rather based on an absence in *Göteborgskarnevalen.*[43] While searching the archival materials the group found an overwhelming representation of straightness and patriarchal values, such as having male- djs and artists listed by name, and anonymous women etc. In response MYCKET explored the queer and feminist club scene of Gothenburg. Through social networks they mapped queer and feminist night clubs and associations that existed since the 1980s and build their own carnival from that mapping.

Exclude Me In was the fourth act of MYCKETs full-scale artistic research project *The Club Scene.*[44] The project consists of enactments of iconic queer and feminist clubs with the aim of exploring the elusive architecture of the night-club. *The Club Scene* consisted of thirteen acts varying from a secret club held in a private apartment to a hypervisible nightclub.

> *"The series examines the (night)club as a space and activity, essential for the drive to act up. In queer movements, the social, the erotic and the political are indissoluble. The club produces self-definition, recognition and a sense of home, perhaps even more so in a queer context."*[45]

43 MYCKET, "Through Our Dance We Weave the Dance Floor and Ceiling - A conversation amongst MYCKET." In *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice. Materialism, Activism, Dialogues, Pedagogies, Projections*. Edited by Meike Schalk et al., 59-73. (Baunach: AADR, 2017), 62.

44 Katarina Bonnevier, Thérèse Kristiansson & Mariana Alves Silva, "Artifacts Introduction Speech", *Architecture and Culture*, 5:3, (2017):256.

45 Katarina Bonnevier, "The Revue of STYLES", *Architecture and Culture*, 5:3, (2017):356.

"Alongside our extended group, we created costumes, hats and instruments for more than hundred people, inspired by the outfits of various clubbers, banners with the names of the clubs and mythical figures of the scene. On Sep 6, 2013 with music and dancing, we realized the dream of what should have been there, with all the people who came to play with us."

— MYCKET on *Exclude Me In*
"Through Our Dance We Weave the Dance Floor and Ceiling...", 62.

Fig.4. Map of *Exclude Me In* by MYCKET, 2015.
source: https://www.mycket.org/CLUBSCENEN-ACT-4-EXCLUDE-ME-IN

The queer clubs can act as modern day (more accessible) salons, where political discourse is taking place in private spaces. The political sphere and the space of appearance is not limited to the public space whether it is enabled by it or simultaneously produces it. In that sense the sphere of the political cannot only be defined through the notion of polis, as space of appearance in polis is reserved for a certain group therefore already defined through exclusion.

The gendered private-public binary in the city

To unpack the concept of *spatially encoded oppression under patriarchal-capitalism*, and dismantle the myth of neutral space, I would like to look at precisely where patriarchy and capitalism intersect in dictating space, namely the valuation and organization of production and reproduction. The understanding of capitalism here, is not only as a dominant economic system, but especially as culture and politics.

In 1980, Dolores Hayden wrote her iconic essay *What would a non-sexist city be like?*[46], in which she imagined reproduction and social reproduction labor structured within the city's fabric as enablers of gender equality. She imagined alternative distribution and density of shared facilities for childcare and other needs, forming participatory citizen groups for sharing unpaid labor[47], housing co-operatives, and alternative housing layouts.
Hayden saw the suburban house especially as the "stage set for the effective sexual division of labor"[48], a container for women's unpaid labor. The house was always uniformly organized, consisting of the same kitchen, dining room, living room, bedroom, etc. spaces, and isolated from shared community spaces, thanks to modernist zoning practices. As a consequence, the house required a full-time private cook, child carer, cleaner, and driver. The household also enforced obligatory heterosexuality, contained within the heterosexual nuclear

46 Dolores Hayden, "What Would a Non-sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design and Human Work". In *Gender, Space, Architecture. An interdisciplinary Introduction.* Edited by Jane Rendell et al., 266-281, (London and New York: Routledge 2000).

47 Which she called HOMES (Homemakers Organization for a More Egalitarian Society).

48 Dolores Hayden, "What Would a Non-sexist City Be Like?", 267.

family.[49] She formulated a programme according to which a transformation from a sexist to non-sexist city must:

> *"(1) involve both men and women in the unpaid labor associated with housekeeping and child care on an equal basis;*
> *(2) involve both men and women[50] in the paid labor force on an equal basis;*
> *(3) eliminate residential segregation by class, race, and age;*
> *(4) eliminate all federal, state, and local programs and laws that offer implicit or explicit reinforcement of the unpaid role of the female homemaker;*
> *(5) minimize unpaid domestic labor and wasteful energy consumption;*
> *(6) maximize real choices for households concerning recreation and sociability."*[51]

Hayden's *fantasy city* is the embodiment of the second-wave feminist postulate of deconstructing the gendered private-public binary, which has tied women to the private sphere and largely to the periphery of the masculine public sphere. This seclusion has been both social and physical, since the discussed private-public binary intersects with the strong divide between "work" and "life" as well as the separation of productive and reproductive or non-productive labour. Hayden stressed that the *"traditional divisions between the household and the market economy, the private dwelling and the workplace"* must be abandoned.[52]

As Hayden, amongst other scholars, emphasizes, this gendered division is a product of the 20th century capitalist organization of labour and the resulting re-organization of the city, or, as David Harvey would put it, capitalist urbanization. Harvey argues that urbanization has been *"a key means of absorption of capital and labour surpluses throughout capitalism's history."*[53]

49 Larry Knopp, "Sexuality and the Spatial Dynamics of Capitalism", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol.10, (1992):651-669.

50 It is worth pointing out that Hayden still uses a very binary logic when it comes to gender issues.

51 Dolores Hayden, "What Would a Non-sexist City Be Like?", 272.

52 Ibid., 270.

53 David Harvey, *Rebel Cities*, 42.

Under capitalism, and consequently capitalist urbanization, what is considered "valuable" space is unanimous with market value or best case scenario with possibility of capitalizing on social value. Private space, private life and private property of certain bodies is protected, but also isolated, as it serves the reproduction of norms. For Hayden, feminist liberation comes from degendering institutions and, consequently or simultaneously, degendering space. This means dealing with the gendered division of space, but, even more so, with the productive vs. reproductive or non-productive space binary and overcoming the spatial boundaries of work and care.

Limits of the private (and gendered) home

Whether in the form of a suburban house or an M2, M3, M4 apartment in a city block, the private home – private shelter for the nuclear 2+2 family – has become the *almost* unquestionable standard of dwelling in the global west. It is a concept in Western urban traditions developed during the process of industrialization and gradual separation of work from other aspects of life. Up until the 19th century, the house was not only a mixture of residential spaces and workshops, but was also occupied by members of the extended family, servants, and protégés.[54] As Hilde Heynen puts it in her analysis, "*domesticity is a construction of the nineteenth century.*"[55]

Modernist fascination with domestic space, fueled by the idea of the betterment of society, further extracted the living cell from its context, as in for example Le Corbusier's "machine for living". Some projects like, for example the russian *komulanka,* show the potential of modernist housing reforms, but its radical potential seemed to get lost in the utopian desire for social control.[56] Furthermore, the total utopian visions of seeking a level of universality and grandiose social reform tend to erase everything ill-fitting to its narrative. As Katarina Bonnevier puts it, *"in modernist design processes, consequence and discipline are worshiped at the expense of differences."*[57] The strict modernist

54 Hilde Heyen, "Modernity and domesticity. Tensions and contradictions." In *Negotiating Domesticity : Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, edited by Hilde Heynen and Gulsum Baydar (London; New York: Routledge, 2005): 1-29.

55 Ibid., 7.

56 Oliver Vallerand, "Home Is the Place We All Share", 64.

57 Katarina Bonnevier "The Revue of STYLES", 364.

hegemonies have been formed by binary oppositions and the universalisations overcoding differences.

The gradual separation of domesticity from other aspects of urban life reached its peak in the 20th century with suburbanization. Despite the back to the city movement during the more recent decades and the reinhabiting of the urban block, the house is commonly understood as the material container for the nuclear family. The house or organization of domestic life has been a major controlling mechanism for sexuality, gender roles and in consequence society at large. The kitchen especially had the crucial role in establishing the gender dynamic of the domestic space through devaluating domestic work.[58]

With an increased individualisation of society in the global west the next step of the contained private home is the studio apartment for the solo-dweller.

During a housing seminar[59] in december 2018, architect Tuomas Toivonen reflected about the studio-apartment situation in Helsinki. The developers insist on making many smaller apartments as they sell faster. In one of his housing projects in Helsinki, *Oikos & Logos*, one of the three units had bigger apartments, the other two had studios or two-room apartments. At the end the bigger apartments all sold, it just took more time compared to the smaller apartments which were almost immediately snatched from the market. Moreover, the bigger apartments were sold to individual home-owners as a primary dwelling. Studio apartments, on the other hand, were primarily bought as investments by bigger entities, which later rent them out on the private market or airbnb.

On the other side of this morbid spectrum are the enormous, luxurious, over the top apartments (mainly in high rise towers) bought by the super-rich as a second, third, fourth…dwelling, which stay empty for most of the time. The studios for rent and empty luxurious penthouses are two sides of the same coin which is buying dwellings not for living but as capital investment.

In the Euro-American context, kinship relations and family are understood within the heteronormative frame, where the heteronormative

58 Anna Puigjaner, "Bringing the Kitchen Out of the House".

59 Tuomas Toivonen, "Notes on Three Housing Projects in the Post-Welfare City." (Lecture, "Ownership. Building. Architecture. A housing seminar.", Museum of Finnish Architecture, Helsinki, December 18 2018).

family is "natural" and essential.[60] Within queer politics, the large variety of kinship models have been overshadowed by the liberal claim for marriage equality. Many scholars[61] have criticized this homonormative focus within queer politics for connecting all queers to the heteronormative family model and excluding various forms of relationships from the debate, such as polyamorous relationships, clover families (with more than two queer-identifying parents), non-sexual partnerships, and other communal relationships. Additionally, there is the queer idea of a "chosen family" – that a family does not have to be constituted "by blood", but it is rather formed by choice among friends in the queer community. The existence of such models is too often overlooked in geography, sociology, and other relevant studies; there is a lack of sufficient studies and statistical observations of such familial, kinship, and related domestic structures. Antu Sorainen points to a distinction between family, kinship and domesticity. "*Kinship, as opposed to marriage and family, refers to a set of practices that address fundamental forms of human dependency, which may include birth, child-rearing, relations of emotional dependency and support, generational ties, illness, dying and death."*[62] Domesticity on the other hand concerns exclusively the arrangements of a household not family or kinship structures. Queer domesticity then *"refers to the intimate LGBTQI+ arrangements of the activities, space, style, and finances of the home."*[63]

Perhaps paradoxically[64], the domestic sphere has also been the space for realizing queer social relationships. It is especially true for women, trans and non-binary people, since they are more restricted in their use of public spaces than cis-gendered man due to, for example, safety reasons.[65]

Some of the factors affecting queer domesticity and various queer living arrangements are class, marriage and parenting status, coming from an

60 Antu Sorainen, "Kinship in Europe. Family models used by LGBTQI persons in Europe." In *Global Encyclopedia of LGBTQ History*, edited by Howard Chiang et al. (Charles Scribner's Sons, 2019), 886.

61 Ibid., 886.

62 Ibid., 885.

63 Antu Sorainen, "Queer Domesticity in Europe. The establishment of alternative households by LGBTQI persons in Europe." In *Global Encyclopedia of LGBTQ History*, edited by Howard Chiang et al., 1312-1314. (Charles Scribner's Sons, 2019), 1312.

64 Paradoxically, since the domestic sphere has been simultaneously place of queer marginalization.

65 Antu Sorainen, "Queer Domesticity in Europe.", 1312.

urban or rural background, as well as access to family inheritance or family funds. Greater financial possibilities allow for more flexibility in terms of choosing or organizing their household situation.[66] Gender is also an important factor as women and trans or gender non-conforming people have less options due to wage discrimination. Additionally, women have more "social space" to create households. Due to economic difficulties and lack of space, it was not that shocking for same-sex people, especially women, to share rooms or beds in a rural and urban working-class setting.

Public, private, urban, common

Houses or the domestic traditionally belongs to the private sphere; however, housing policies and the current pressing housing crises are public matters. Streets, on one hand, are archetypically public spaces, but they also serve as threshold points of the city by accommodating various flows and connections. Above all, both elements are subjected to complicated ownership situations by both public and private entities.
While *queer* breaks the binaries of gender and sexual, *queering the urban* further blurs the categorizations of the private and public space in the city.

This thesis is not tied to any specific location; however, as mentioned before, I focus on *the city*, as the most (socially and physically) condense human habitat, but also the main arena of politics, economy, and culture. The *promise of the city* — the one of progressiveness, freedom and sometimes escape — has been a major reason for queer migration.[67] Part of the "promise of the city" is to provide the space of appearance for everyone, but paradoxically, the access to space of appearance can be severely limited in *the city* through ordering mechanisms or *urban order*. Stavros Stavrides defines urban order as *"the impossible limit towards which practices of spatial classification and hierarchisation tend in order to ensure that the city produces those spatial relations that are necessary for capitalism's reproduction."*[68] Those ordering mechanisms are enabled by what in Foucault's terms would be 'mechanisms

66 Ibid.

67 Jasbir Puar, "A transnational feminist critique of queer tourism.", 936.

68 Stavros Stavrides, "Common Space as Threshold Space: Urban Commoning in Struggles to Re-appropriate Public Space." *FOOTPRINT* 16, (june 2015):9.

of social normalisation', which often take spatial forms.

Stavrides points to what shapes the normalization project today. Firstly, individuals are seen as economic subjects through economic measures and parameters alone. Secondly, it strives to ensure that people do not act collectively unless it is with an economical purpose.[69] Both of these are means of capitalist urbanization and, ultimately, shape the urban environment; separating work from life and further sanitizing urban zones. *"Urban ordering is therefore oriented towards the expansive urbanity of a 'city of enclaves'."*[70] Those urban enclaves are site-specific, self-contained worlds within the urban fabric, which are ordered by slightly inside rules and power relations imposing behavior patterns and identity. Stavros argues that the emerging forms of resistance to urban ordering and the project of normalization come in spatialized forms, as they need the urban space to build bonds and collectivity in struggle and survival.

Urban enclaves separate us from each other and further with the neoliberal climate of austerity, privatization of public spaces and selling off public housing, what was "public" is losing its meaning.

The concept that has been widely discussed as a remedy for this crisis of the *publics,* and the battle between public and private, is the concept of *urban commons* – a shared resource. Elinor Ostrom argues that a common is a process rather than a resource.[71] As a negotiation among a self-defined community of commoners, *common* is better understood as a verb, describing the practice of commoning. Ostrom also argues that a common needs a strategy of managing and set of rules in order to avoid the "tragedy of the commons" – abuse by one person or group.

Spaces of commoning can be understood as "*a set of spatial relations produced by such practices and negotiations."*[72] Additionally, as Stravides

69 Ibid., 9.

70 Ibid., 10.

71 Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (1990).

72 Julia Wieger, "Reproductive commonsFrom within and beyond the kitchen," in *Architecture and Feminisms: Ecologies, Economies, Technologies.*, edited by Helene Frichot, et al., (London: Routledge, 2017), 243.

argues, space is not merely a product of commoning but a commoning is enabled through space; space is a means of commoning.[73]

> *"[T]he city becomes not only the setting but also the means to collectively experiment with possible alternative forms of social organisation. Moreover, the sharing of space becomes a crucially important stake, both as a means of experimenting and as one of the goals of such experiments."*[74]

The debate around the commons or spaces of commoning put into question not only the capitalist way of living through examining *"everyday practices for possibilities of less exploitative ways of living together"*[75], but also the capitalist logic of space ownership. The idea of common spaces, in contrast to private or public, is that there is no clear authority governing it. While public spaces are governed by rules established by a local, regional or state authority and the economic entities or individuals owning private spaces have the right to specify the conditions of private space use,[76] the authority over commons is supposed to be democratically negotiated. Of course, at some point there is the problem of scale. Something that works on one scale may not work on a bigger or smaller, at some point there might be a need for some kind of hierarchy or regulation. And some form of enclosure to protect the resource is not necessarily a bad thing. It just shifts the issue of commons not becoming enclaves to the centre of the debate. It is always about "who is included?".

Stavrides argues that for commoning to work on a bigger scale would require new kinds of (political) institutions. He calls for institutions of commoning to act differently than many dominating institutions. In his view, the mainstream institutions reduce diverse experiences of people in the city to neutralized subjectivities and abstract rights. Because of that public spaces are governed by generic rules that apply to homogenised users.[77] Institutions

73 Stavros Stavrides, *Common Space,* (London: Zed books, 2016), 4.

74 Stavros Stavrides, "Common Space as Threshold Space...", 10.

75 Julia Wieger, "Reproductive commons...", 243.

76 Stavros Stavrides, "Common Space as Threshold Space...", 10-11.

77 Stavros Stavrides, "Common Space as Threshold Space...",13.

of commoning have to give space for negotiation and mediation. They must also support the influx of newcomers to the "circles of commoning" and have mechanisms in place to prevent accumulation of power by individuals.[78]

The space of commoning is a physical space negotiated somewhere between the private and public or perhaps a bit outside of those. On the other hand it is an imaginary space or an idea in itself which frames sharing of space and producing space itself as a transparent, democratic process.

(Re)production of space

Four decades of discourse and struggle after Hayden's essay, the city is still gendered, perhaps in more nuanced and cynical ways. The lack of childcare-related services has been subsidised with exploitive commodification of social reproduction labor performed by (in large and increasing part) migrant women.[79] The same goes for housework. Instead of being reduced through technologization and equally redistributed, it has been commercialized and globalized and (again!) in an overwhelming part put on the shoulders of marginalized women. This is because unlike producing commodities, social reproduction cannot be reduced to mechanization. As Silvia Federici puts it, it is because:

> *"the reproduction of human beings is to a great extent irreducible to mechanization, being the satisfaction of complex needs, in which physical and affective elements are inextricably combined, requiring a high degree of human interaction and a most labor-intensive process."*[80]

All this has led to a boom of the housework and childcare-related service industry, which now makes up the dominant economic sector from the perspective of wage employment.[81]

78 Ibid., 15.

79 Silvia Federici, "The reproduction of labour-power in the global economy, Marxist theory ant the unfinished feminist revolution." (Paper presented at "The Crisis of Social Reproduction and Feminist Struggle" seminar at UC Santa Cruz January 27, 2009.)

80 Ibid.

81 Silvia Federici, "The reproduction ..."

What was fantasized to be restructured within the urban commons was largely commodified within private space. Additionally, the 2007 financial crisis, followed by drastic cuts in state social provisioning, increased the infiltration of social reproduction by capital even further.[82] What was once invisible labor performed by women in the seclusion of the suburban home became, in the words of Silvia Federici, *"value-producing services that workers must purchase and pay for"*[83]. However, it is also crucial to acknowledge diverse economies that work outside of capitalist one. Following Gibson and Graham, capitalist labour relations are just a tip of the iceberg of world's economies.[84]

For Federici commons are tightly linked to reproductive labour, "t*he production of commons requires first a profound transformation in our everyday life, in order to recombine what the social division of labour in capitalism has separated*"[85]. She argues that collective forms of reproduction, the reproductive commons, offer a way of resistance against capitalist relations.

The paradigm model of a house is strongly attached to the heteronormative family and hence it is the model of heterosexual naturalization. Simultaneously it works as the model for queer marginalization.

Silvia Federici argues that capitalism relies on reproducing a certain type of worker, which requires the reproduction of a particular type of family, sexuality, relationships, and procreation. She thus calls *"to redefine the private sphere as a sphere of relations of production and a terrain of anti-capitalist struggle."*[86] While this liberates women from the traditional container of free labor and exploitation, the private and public sphere, and consequently space, must be critically examined from the perspective of the city, spatial relations,

82 Isabella Bakker, "Social Reproduction and the Constitution of a Gendered Political Economy." , 541.

83 Silvia Federici, "The reproduction ..."

84 JK Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*, Oxford UK and Cambridge USA: Blackwell Publishers (1996).

85 Silvia Federici, 'Feminism and the Politics of the Common in an Era of Primitive Accumulation (2010)' In *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*, edited by Silvia Federici, (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012):144.

86 Silvia Federici, "The reproduction..."

and queer spatial relations. It is not only that spatial practices use the private / public space divide in planning — making housing policies detached from urban fabric and designing life between buildings ignoring life inside them. It is that this division is fiction. Both because the production of family, sexuality, etc. is not limited to private and domestic, it takes communal and public forms. Further space is not only domestic, public, private etc. productions of space overlap. Through domesticating the public space and commonig the private sphere queer offers a way to question those paradigms.

Space cannot be "straight" or "queer" itself per se, but it is produced or performed as such. Norms and relations of power need to be constantly reproduced in space — it is a continuous negotiation of power, ownership, safety, and visibility. Understanding the spatial dynamic of power as performative reveals it as unstable and exposed to deconstruction. *Queering* as the breaking of the binaries of public/private, and consequently that of productive/non-productive, allows the repositioning of the value of space in the city.

ESSAYS ON QUEER URBAN COMMUNALITY

The following part of the thesis is a collection of five essays on queer urban situations.

The essays vary in style and approach depending on the theme and study method. They differ in the way information was acquired as well as my personal relationship to the situations or my agency or (the lack of) within them. In some situations I not only as a researcher, but a subject/agent as well and apply autoethnographic observations, thus their tone might be more personal.

The first two essays investigate queer urban communality from within the typology of the house. *Queering House* uses various case studies in a quest to find house typologies beyond the single-house unit. *Sketches from domestic life...* shows three queer households from Helsinki, using etnographic observations, short interviews and drawings of the apartments.

Producing Queer Space investigates the Underground Drag Scene in Helsinki. I present interviews with two of the producers and performers from the scene.

For essays 4. & 5. I acquired information via other academic texts or investigating news articles etc., so the tone is more serious and academic. *Street Life* uses the example of Christopher's street in New York City to contextualize the struggles of a small urban fragment in the neighbourhood-scale processes and city planning policies. *Gentrification & claiming space* investigates several approaches to understanding queerness of neighbourhoods.

1

QUEERING HOUSE

Is queer housing possible?

In his article "Strategies for living in houses", Colin Ripley states that queer housing is an utopia, that is is impossible because the single-family house and further apartments, condominiums, etc. "*is a central structure of heterosexual hegemony, the primary architectural expression of hetero-normativity.*", he writes:

> *"All housing, at least in the developed world, is designed and constructed from within that hegemonic tradition, using models that assume heteronormativity in its users: even if the client for a new house is, for example, a gay couple, all decisions made in the design are made from within a straight tradition, all construction is produced by a construction industry formed around non-queer hegemonic industrial and business practices, all materials sourced and processed from within an exploitative colonising regime of resource extraction. And what would be different anyway? Wouldn't our hypothetical gay couple want the same things as everyone else: a master bedroom with ensuite bath, a guest bedroom or maybe a room for the kid, a yard where they can sit out and a patio for barbecuing, a living room with a huge TV…"*[1]

Further, Ripley describes three strategies used by queers to live in houses; strategies of occupation, avoidance and intervention. He frames occupation as hiding within houses; A strategy of the closet.[2] Avoidance, on the other hand, is a strategy of the outcast — making habitats in abandoned factories or storefronts —until these become re-developed for the (straight) market— or "*living outside of hegemonic forms: in shelters, or rooming houses, in hotels or on the street.*"[3]

The strategy of intervention is "*a strategy of costuming – it is the house in drag.*" He calls it the most aggressive strategy, the one of de-norming, appropriation and queer colonisation. But, "*this is also the strategy of queer gentrification. (...) We make changes that cannot cause alarm, that are easily restored, and worse, that increase our property values – strengthening along the way the hold of the hegemony.*"[4]

1 Colin Ripley, "Strategies for living in houses." *FOOTPRINT* 21, (december 2017): 95.

2 Ibid., 98.

3 Ibid., 99.

4 Ibid., 99-100.

If the heteronormative family is the basis for the typology of a house and housing policy, the queering of the "family" calls for acknowledging and developing the different forms of living. But to fully embrace the potential of queering houses one must broaden the focus from "singular house units" and "households" and focus more on a collective urban experience, further challenging the binary of private vs. public space.

This collectivity is well embodied in the *houses* of the ballroom scene as well as queer shelters and squats or communes found within cracks in the normative housing structures. The following examples have elements of Ripley's strategies of avoidance and intervention, but by emphasising the communality and social reproduction labour it takes to sustain them, they offer an inspiration for forming new queering strategies for houses.

Houses

Houses are a product of the ballroom scene which originated in New York in the 70s within the Black and Latino queer community.[5] A *house* is a collective of performers originally from the ballroom scene who compete in *balls*. The meaning of what *a ball* is changed over time and place, but it is basically a queer social event involving runway walks and, later, dance battles.[6]

In Jenny Livingston's controversial[7] documentary *Paris is Burning* two young boys from Harlem and the Bronx explain what the gay/queer community is by refering to themselves as sisters.[8] As pointed by Johan Andersson;

> *"the gender-neutral sisterhood alluded to by these children points to a queer mode of sociality beyond the mimicking of the straight nuclear family. Moreover, this sisterhood of the street reminds us that it was violent exclusion from traditional familial kinship structures that facilitated social change in the first place."* [9]

Indeed, *the houses* were to a large extend realized in public space through this sisterhood of the street formed between queer nomads rejected from heteronormative family. As one character in the movie says – *"a house is a gay street gang"*. Thus, a *house* can be understood as a non-material structure for realizing kinship, a chosen family.

There is a unique mixture of public and private embodied in the construct of a *house*. On one hand, a house acts as a public entity, almost a brand for a group of performers participating in dance and performance

5 See, for example; Tim Lawrence, "Listen, and You Will Hear all the Houses that Walked There Before: A History of Drag Balls, Houses and the Culture of Voguing". Introduction to *Voguing and the Gay Ballroom Scene of New York City,1989-92,* Chantal Regnault (London: Soul Jazz, 2011).

6 Tradition of balls originated in New York City's Harlem and now happens in cities around the world. It firstly had a more pageant or masquerade character and later developed into events involving *voguing* dance battles and competitions in walking runway categories.

7 Authors like bell hooks pointed out the problematic white ethnographic gaze on a Black subculture.

8 Anonymous young boy in *Paris is Burning*, Jenny Livingstone, 1990.

9 Johan Andersson, "*Wilding* in the West Village...", 280.

competitions. On the other, members of a house reproduce family figures and relationships – they are their mothers, fathers, legendary children, protégés with a kinship-like line of succession. It is Butler's acts of subversion of identity[10] in action. Above all, *a house* often contains the emotional, loving, caring relationships between members of a marginalized community.

All those relationships had, and in many cases still have, strong spatial implications through creating communal living arrangements or providing shelter for homeless youth. Even if a house does not implicate a dwelling arrangement for its members, it brings certain domesticity into the public sphere, by producing spaces, which go beyond the traditional idea of a home, but where "family", or broadly kinship, is realized. Whether their focus is more on performance, activism, or creating a support network, *houses* provide structure for different forms of domesticized queer collectivity.

Shelters

S.T.A.R. house in New York was started in 1970 by the "mothers" of the gay and especially trans liberation movement, Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. Johnson and Rivera recognized the problem of shelter for trans youth and they both often experienced homelessness. When they could afford a temporary place to stay, they shared this resource among their community: "*Marsha and I had always sneaked people into our hotel rooms. And you can sneak 50 people into two hotel rooms.*"[11] In need of more organized action, they started S.T.A.R. – Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, the first such initiative in NY – with the aim to provide housing for young drag queens and trans women experiencing homelessness.[12] The first version of the STAR house was a trailer parked in a parking lot in Greenwich Village, which served both as a shelter and a social space for queer youth. Later, through a fundraiser, Johnson and Rivera were able to buy a 4-bedroom apartment in a run-down building at 213 East 2nd Street in the East Village, and despite the lack of heat and electricity they managed to repair it and make it into a home for many. In

10 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 171-180.

11 Leslie Feinberg, "Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries", *Workers World Party,* September 24, 2006, https://www.workers.org/2006/us/lavender-red-73/.

12 Ibid.

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Fig.5&6. Stills from Paris Is Burning
source: *Paris Is Burning*, Jennie Livingston, Santa Monica, CA: Miramax, 1990.

1979, Rivera addressed this struggle: *"We had a STAR House–a place for all of us to sleep. It was only four rooms, and the landlord had turned the electricity off. So we lived there by candlelight, a floating bunch of 15 to 25 queens, cramped in those rooms with all our wardrobe. But it worked."*[13] Taking the roles of the "mothers" of the household, Rivera and Johnson continued to fund it and provide food for all members largely through sex work.[14] The top floor of the house was supposed to become a school for youth who often did not finish school or learn how to read and write due to being forced out of their family homes at an early age.

The New York STAR house existed for around a year, but was a source of inspiration to many others like the Transy house[15] – a transgender collective operated by Rusty Mae Moore and Chelsea Goodwin from 1995 to 2008 in Park Slope, Brooklyn.[16] Moore and Goodwin founded Transy House in a rowhouse owned by Moore with the intention of having a communal living space with friends. However, the house gained a more political role, functioning as a centre for political action and a safe haven for homeless trans and gender non-conforming people.[17] Moore described this development with – *"...it was sort of unique for trans people to own a house in New York, so other people started to say, 'I need a place to live. Can I come and live with you?'"* Transy house was home for 13 people at the time.

The existence of the STAR house, as well as the Transy house, was based on social reproduction and reframing the meaning of a house, household, and family. Through this queering, the houses gained a function of community centers for the neighborhood or even the city, and a symbolic meaning and global influence as part of queer history.

13 "Transy House", http://www.nyclgbtsites.org/site/transy-house/.
14 Leslie Feinberg, "Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries".
15 Transy House became the home for Sylvia Rivera later on in her life.
16 "Transy House", http://www.nyclgbtsites.org/site/transy-house/.
17 Ibid.

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Fig.7. Transy House in Brooklyn, New York
source: https://www.nyclgbtsites.org/site/transy-house/

Squats

The Türkis Rosa Lila Villa is a self-administered, queer community center and co-housing project, situated in an old residential building in Vienna. The project originated from the queer and squatter movement in 1982 under the name "Rosa Lila Villa - First Viennese Lesbian and Gay House."[18] After two years of squatting, the association Rosa Lila Tip negotiated a 30-year period of self-governance and usage of the building in exchange for renovating it, and the house got a general refurbishment in 1985.[19] Since then the Villa serves as a place for collective housing, consulting and an information center – Rosa Lila Tipp[20], a café and restaurant, a shared courtyard garden, a place of activist organization, and a starting point for interventions in heteronormative structures of Vienna. The building is still owned by the City of Vienna, but the existence of the Türkis Rosa Lila Villa was secured by the renewed negotiation of a building lease until 2045. The villa pays a construction interest and acts as property management. As we can read on the collectives' website, the project "represents a utopian alternative to the dominant mainstream concepts of heteronormativity, patriarchy and binary identity constructions" and a refuge for queers from the nuclear family.[21] Today, 11 people live in the upper floors of the villa in 3 shared apartments, which together make up the residential association.[22]

The villa houses a mixture of alternative living and political work. With its visible location, it serves as a support structure for different initiatives with all of them in one way or another addressing spatial politics. One example is the project Queer Base, which offers support to queer asylum seekers. The support structure provided by the villa relies on reproductive labor, which, as Julia Wieger points out, cannot be only categorized under capitalist economy.[23] This labor is often draining and goes unnoticed as one of the activists tells.[24]

18 The evolution of the name from Rosa Lila Villa to Türkis Rosa Lila Villa reflects the discussions in the community. Although the house was founded by lesbians and gays, it opened toward trans people and activism in the mid-1990s.

19 *Die Türkis Rosa Lila Villa.* "Geschichte." Accessed 17 January 2018. https://dievilla.at/

20 Which was one of the first counseling points of this kind in Vienna.

21 Translated roughly from German from: *Die Türkis Rosa Lila Villa.* "Geschichte."

22 *Die Türkis Rosa Lila Villa.* "Leben." Accessed 17 January 2018. https://dievilla.at/

23 Julia Wieger, "Reproductive commons...", 247.

24 Ibid., 247.

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Fig.8. Rosa Lila Villa in 1987
source: Die Türkis Rosa Lila Villa, https://dievilla.at/

The different forms of support, care, and exchange go beyond the realm of a household and position the villa visibly in the structure of Vienna[25] as *"an experimental ground for establishing reproductive commons."*[26]

25 This visibility is also very literal due to the pink facade of the building and different permanent and transparent signs, like the "Schwulen- und Lesbenhaus" (Gay and Lesbian house) painted above the door.

26 Julia Wieger, "Reproductive commons...", 247.

Fig.9. Rosa Lila Villa today
source: Die Türkis Rosa Lila Villa, https://dievilla.at/

The cases of the communal houses show the commonly appearing connection between queer politics and the squatting scene.[27] Opposing rising rents and real-estate speculation have been part of queer spatial politics ever since queer liberation movements got their momentum in the 60s and 70s.
In these cases, the house has become an urban common sustained through acts of care, but also through negotiations and exchanges which detach themselves more and more from the capitalist logic. With the recent boom of co-living projects – such as Old Oak in London managed by The Collective or KomBo in Stockholm led by Utopia Arkitekter[28] – which seek to commodify and capitalize on collective living, it is perhaps crucial to approach any such project from the perspective of social reproduction.

When she was interviewed during the time she lived in a self-constructed home at pier 54 on the east coast of Manhattan, Sylvia Rivera expressed her criticism of the closing off of the piers for the new Hudson River Park project. She said: *"Why can't they just give us one of those buildings to renovate – we did it with Marsha in the 70s..."*[29] This sentiment becomes more and more impossible. In this condition of, on one hand, lesser access to land and building resources and, on the other, the brutal commodification of everything, what would be the new strategy for queering the house?

27 Julia Wieger, "Reproductive commons...", 246.

28 For a feminist critique of those projects see Hélène Frichot and Helen Runting, "In Captivity. The real estate of co-living" In *Architecture and Feminisms: Ecologies, Economies, Technologies.*, edited by Helene Frichot, et al., 140-149. London: Routledge, 2017.

29 *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson*, directed by David France. Public Square Films, 2017.

2

SKETCHES FROM DOMESTIC LIFE...

Sketches from domestic life...

(of some queers in Helsinki)

Ripley frames the *occupation* strategy for living in houses as the most assimilationist one, the strategy of the closet — queers hiding in houses[1]. However, this queer occupation of houses showes a certain resilience and flexibility of queering — the ability to adapt existing stuctures produced (within a heteronormative framework) to queer life. Additionally, tracing the spirit of the reproductive commons of the squats from the previous essay in a smaller, perhaps less radical scale of shared city-block apartments can reveal some shortcomings of how we (architects) design apartment buildings.

Investigating the communality of queer housing communes poses the obvious question of what makes them different from non-queer(?) housing communes? Is it neccecary to emphasize the queer aspect or is there some inheret queerness in any housing commune?

One way to look at it is, of course, from the perspective of the people living in a commune, the tenants. If the majority or all of the tenants are queer then naturally the housing commune is. Queer comunal households would then mean shared living arrangements of (mostely) queer people. But such approach would merely position queer communes as closeted, assimilationist occupational startegy. Perhaps there is something more in the organization of life and space, in the little details or in the motivation of the tenants, that make a housing commune queer.

To look for those little queer details I will analize three queer communal households in Helsinki. All the households are located in multistory apartment buildings around Helsinki. For each case I will briefly describe the tenants and their living arrangement as well as present the layout and additional relevant sketches from the apartments. The apartments have different layouts and in each space is negotiated in a different way.

***

For privacy reasons all the tenants have been given pseudonyms and there is no mention of the exact locations of the houses they live in.

1 Colin Ripley, “Strategies for living in houses.”, 98.

Organized chaos

Two queer siblings Lev&Morela share an apartment with their friend Flower. The apartment is rather small for a four room apartment (63m2) therefore each person's room is between 7 and 8.3m2. They, however, have comfortable shared spaces; a living room with a balcony and a separate kitchen with great morning light. The apartment is a rather open one; all three tenants often have guests, make dinner parties and have their partners or lovers stay over. Some of the frequent guests, like Morela's girlfriend Raspberry, have their toothbrush space in the bathroom and maybe even a bit of space in the drawers.

Fig.10. *Community of toothbrushes.*

Lev, Morela and Flower make a lot of plans for the apartment organization. Some things are done impressively fast like the time they got most of needed furniture within two trips to the recycling centre. Others, like getting and using an apartment calendar or making common biweekly cleanings are passed from one to-do list to the other since the day they moved in together. Despite not having an organized plan, they just keep each other updated with everything and somehow, organically things in the apartment run smoothly.

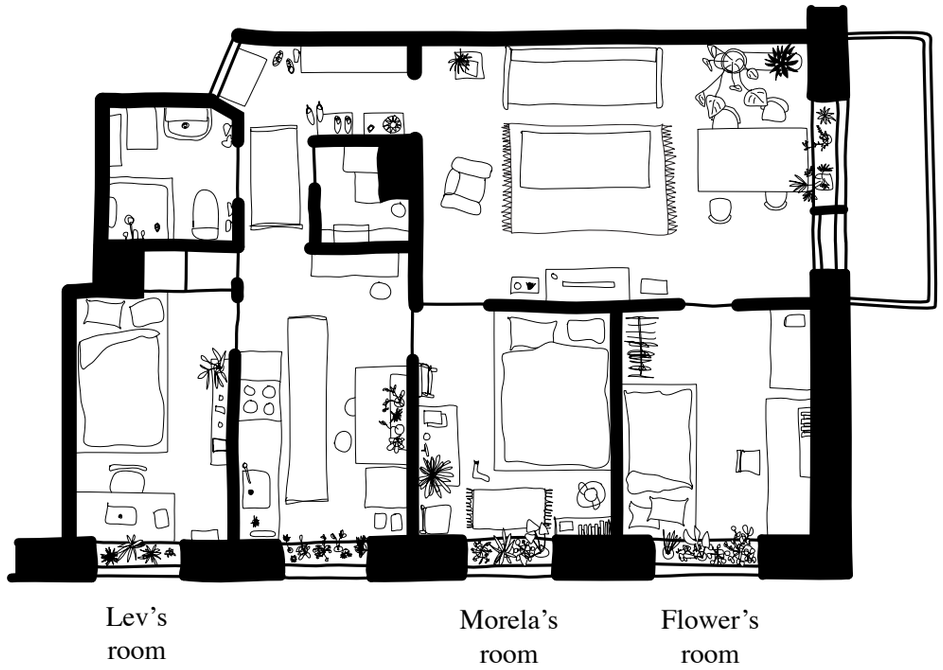

Fig.11. *Apartment layout.*

Harmony of rules

Raspberry also lives in a queer commune. She lives with two long time friends Sunshine and Cat-parent and Cat-parents cat Shakira. They live in a multi-story house from 1910 which current owner only or mostly rents out flats for collective living. The house being from that era and standing in a rather prominent location (by one of the main streets in Kallio) has an elaborate facade, very high ceilings and huge rooms, or as Raspberry and Morela jokingly call them, chambers.

This commune has a very systematic approach when it comes to organizing life together. Every month they have a house meeting, where they discuss how everyone is doing and all the apartment related stuff. After the meeting they go for a big grocery shopping together. Every month they also have a common cleaning of the whole apartment, every two weeks they calculate all the expenses. Everything in the apartment is shared and each tenant is responsible for a different thing (laundry, trash, fridge etc.). When they moved in together the rules for common living were written down and stuck on the side of the fridge.

Fig.12. *Apartment rules on the fridge.*

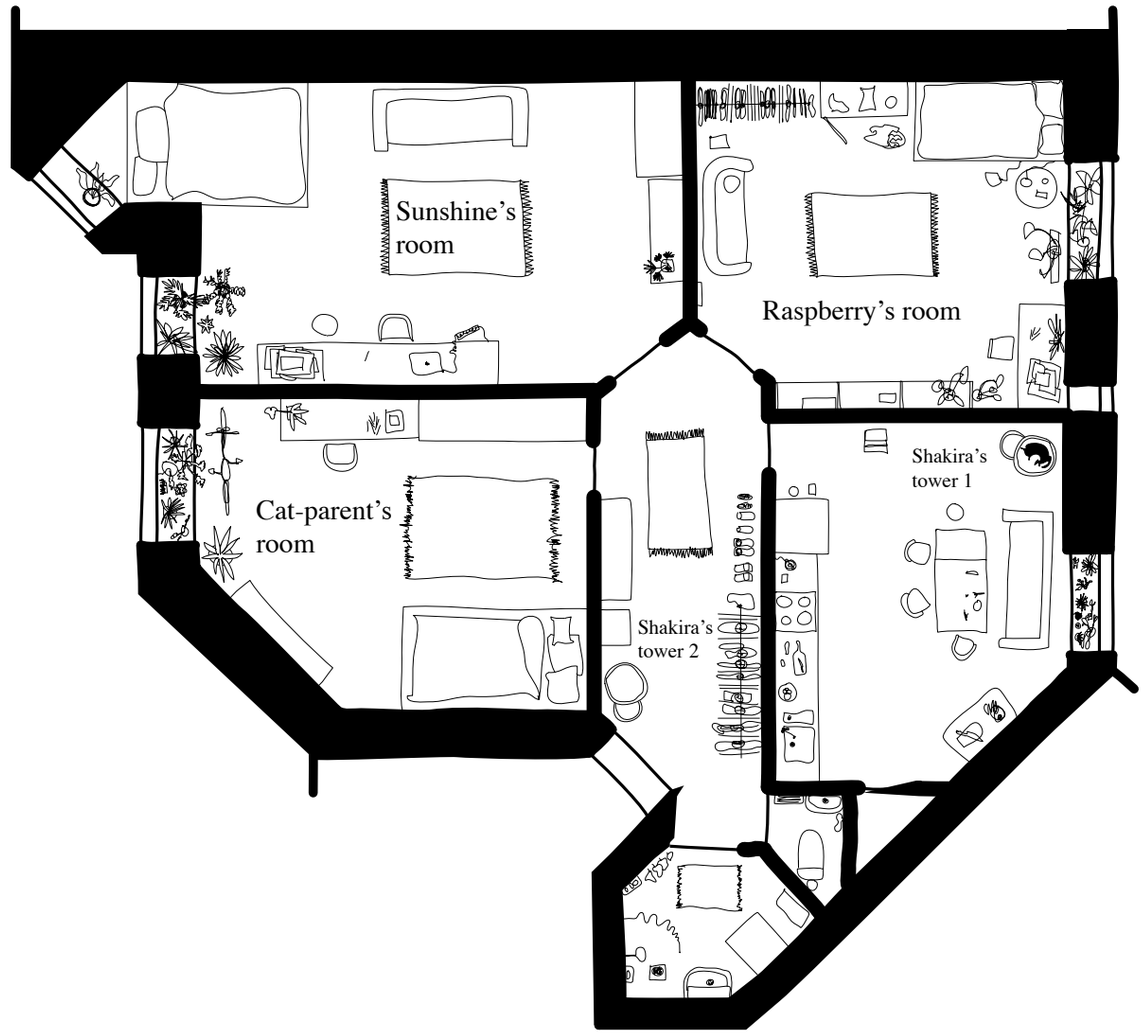

Fig.13. *Apartment layout.*

Balance of two

Five minute walk from Rasberry's apartment, live two friends: queer gals Honey and Kitten. They are also friends of Lev&Morela and by extension Raspberry. The apartment they rent out is (almost) perfect to share for two. It has two big and almost equal size rooms (both around 16m2) separated by bathroom, kitchen and a small hallway. The common spaces are too small though, especially the kitchen. But having big rooms, 30s glass doors and the bathtub somewhat make up for it.

For both Honey and Kitten it is important to share a flat with someone to whom they feel comfortable talking about anything, as well as someone they can share everyday things, like trying out new recipes, going for walks and creating traditions such as saturday morning almond croissant breakfasts. They are quite relaxed about errands and who's turn it is to do what, so they don't keep any schedule or rules, just try to be fair and help each other out.

Fig.14. *Breakfast table for little support talks.*

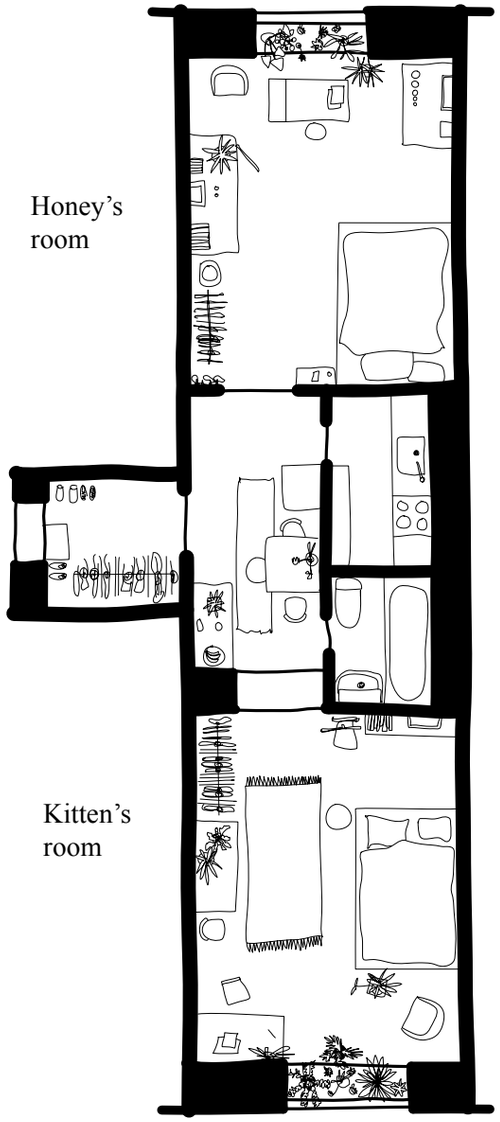

Fig.15. *Apartment layout.*

***

Going back to the question of queerness and housing communes. One of the key "queer" aspect of a queer commune is the motivation — the need for organizing own structures outside heteronormativity, the need for shelter when rejected from it, a stronger need for a social support network to survive in an queer-*un*-friendly world. For many queers it is not a temporary solution due to housing shortage or being in a certain stage of life, but a way they want to live their life. In any case, with different apartments, different layouts, different arrangements it is always about making it work, about queering the space, adding queer artifacts, opening the house for others.

The three sketched households are all somehow connected; through friendships, romantic relationships, tinder matches from the past, or just knowing each other from some queer events. And there are many more houses connected to them in this way. The support network from the apartments extends to the neighbourhoods and the city. And perhaps this act of opening the houses, making them parts of some urban network where life of many and different people takes place, is the queerest thing about them.

As Madden and Marcuse write in *Defense of Housing*:

> *"People do not live in homes. They live in neighbourhoods and communities. They occupy buildings but also locations in a social fabric. A radical right to housing must affirm and protect this web of relations"*[2]

A queerer, systemic transformation towards a *right to housing* would take into account the complex social, physical and cultural connections of the body to kinship structures, to the community, to the neighbourhood and the city.

2 David Madden and Peter Marcuse, *In Defense of Housing* (London: Verso, 2016), 331.

From a strictly design point of view: The analyzed apartments indeed had different layouts, however there were common design factors that rarely appear in contemporary housing design. One of them was having more or less equally sized rooms instead of a master bedroom and small kid-rooms, which allows for equal distribution of the rooms to the tenants. The other was having a separated kitchen instead of the kitchen+living combo. This allows either for using all rooms as separate spaces for the tenants or having two seperate rooms (kitchen and living room) for communal use, which makes living together so much easier.

There are, of course, other collective living typologies such as elderly housing, student dorms or eco-villages, which are not necessary queer, so in that sense it is not fair to assign collectivity solely to queerness. Nethertheless, the problematic part of housing design under heteronormativity is that those collective housing typologies are very limited or reserved for groups at a certain stage of life. If we would take a queered, diversified view on what kind of domestic arrangements there are and could be, perhaps the sketches from queer domestic life in regular city-block apartments would include more than people making it work in the conditions they have. In a way, life will always prevail design, and queers *will* make whatever they have work, the question is can it be made easier?

3

PRODUCING QUEER SPACE

Producing queer space.
Interviews with producers and performers from the *Underground Drag Scene* in Helsinki.

When I first moved to Helsinki I was on a quest to find the "underground queer scene" which has been mentioned to me on numerous ocasions prior and said to be absolutely amazing. Historically, or as an informal practice it is drag queens or drag artists who are the care takers of queer communities, the glue that holds us together and keeps our stories and memories unforgotten. Nowadays, with the rapid commodification and commercialization of drag culture, this role of drag performers is perhaps a bit forgotten or shadowed by the commercial side of it all. However, I still believed my best chance of finding the queer underground of Helsinki was through drag. A couple of months of intense insta search later I stumbled across *Nights of Jaahas*, an *Underground Drag* event organized by *House of Jaahas*. They were my first introduction to the scene, which eventually played a big role in making Helsinki feel more like home.

What follows is a recap of the interviews I had with two performers and producers of the *Underground Drag Scene* in Helsinki: Shady Stardust, one of the founding members of House of Jaahas and Lamey Crackhouse, co-organizer of *Drag Me To Hel*, the underground club that gave birth to the whole scene. The interviews are supplemented by information I gathered from social media or during some of the events.

I met with Shady Stardust over 1 year ago for a face-to-face three hour long amazing conversation in a cafe in Kallio. With Lamey Crackhouse I got in touch this spring. We were supposed to meet over lunch, but as the pandemic situation escalated we made the interview online. I emailed Lamey my questions and she emailed back her answers. I combined Lamey's answers with the recap from my conversation with Shady to create a two voiced story about the *Underground Drag Scene.* (Or three if you include my voice as the narrator.)

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Beginnings

Lamey Crackhouse: "*I'm in my mid-late thirties. I'm mixed race and from North London. I moved to Finland in 2009 and started doing drag the following year. My relationship with drag is long and complex; drag for me feels like all the forms of escapism I developed growing up have come together to create this beautiful crazy mess I call Lamey. Growing up, I was bullied and had an abusive father, so I spent a lot of time alone during my formative years finding ways to make myself laugh and I constantly would come up with funny comebacks to my aggressors in my head. I've always danced and lip synced by myself to my favorite female artists. And I had always felt an affinity with the grand dame drag queens of British entertainment such as Lily Savage and Dame Edna, whose brutal and self deprecating humour clearly influenced me greatly."*

The idea, backstory and look for the character came to life in 2010 and that year's Helsinki burlesque festival was the first time Lamey was out in drag:

L.C.: *"I was awful, we didn't have Drag Race*[1] *back then or youtube tutorials so the makeup was ...well, it was something else. And I wore the wrong sized shoes so I ended up walking home barefoot in the snow. Later that year we did the first Drag Me To Hel, Bettie Blackheart gave me first hosting gigs and the rest was history."*

House of Jaahas (HoJ) is a collective of drag artists founded in 2017. They perform, produce their own club nights and so far have organized two editions of *Jaahas <3 Loukko Underground Drag Workshops* in collaboration with the Center of Subcultures Loukko. *Nights of Jahaas* was a series of 11 clubs of drag, burlesque and spoken word. The collective was formed when the founding members Cherry Propaganda, Hyperfemme and Shady Stardust attended Lola Vanilla's drag course, School of Vanilla class of 2016.

Shady Stardust: *"If I hadn't seen that you could do it differently, I wouldn't start doing it. I saw in Drag me To HEL that drag doesn't have to be cis gay*

1 *RuPaul's Drag Race* is an american reality-tv competition show where drag queens compete for America's Next Drag Superstar title. In recent years the show gained enormous popularity globally, somewhat bringing drag into mainstream pop culture.

men cracking misogynistic jokes, it can be so much queerer. That's how I got into it."

What made it possible and encouraging for Shady Stardust to even start drag, was seeing that you can do different forms of drag, also political drag and the feeling of being welcome to the scene despite gender. In the mainstream drag scene it is mostly cisgender gay men who are doing it. Additionally, it was seeing "*that you don't have to be a trained professional or have loads of money to pay for expensive props & clothes in order to do drag"*.
What constitutes drag, for Shady, is addressing the issues of gender somehow. Drag has the aspect of playing with or subverting gender, this is what makes it different.

L.C.: "*I think the Drag scene actually probably really started to boom around 2015–2017, that's when the school of Vanilla took off and most of the big name performers you see today began their performing careers. It's true that most of the performers today got their first gigs at one of our shows or are a part of our houses or houses of our children.*"

People from the *Underground Drag Scene* make sure to credit Lola Vanila and Lamey Crackhouse as well as their *Drag Me To Hel* series as the beginnings of the current scene. When HoJ were planning their first Nights of Jaahas club they asked for Lola's blessing: *"We wanted to make sure we didn't step on her toes even though our club format was going to be different from DMTH."* says Shady.

L.C.: *"Drag Me to Hel started in 2010, at the old cable factory in Helsinki. We (Lola and myself) had kinda grown exhausted of the existing drag community in Helsinki. There was a lot of hostility and exclusivity in the existing scene and we didn't fit into that, so we decided to create something where anyone who was interested in drag and wanted to perform could perform. From the very start it was a struggle, we made no money and there was no audience for drag at the time, people just did not know what it was. The following year we had to cancel DMTH, then we took a break from producing and focused on performing. When we decided to come back, we found Dubrovnik and it was like destiny, like we had come home. We had two successful years of shows*

and at that time Drag Race had blown up in Europe so we booked Ben de la creme and then things really exploded in the Finnish scene. I can't really talk about the future of our club, but we are always active in the community on stage and behind the scenes."

Finding spaces for shows has been and is an ongoing struggle within the community. *Nights of Jahaas* was organized in Lepakkomies bar, which was not an ideal space. It was in the basement, crowded, cramped, people were getting tired and dizzy in the space, but as Shady put it, "it was there". It was easy to get through connections to the music scene and it was financially accessible.

L.C.: *"Most venues are afraid to be associated with us and don't understand what we are and what we are trying to do. Even supposedly LGBT+ organisations have typically greeted us with hostility and suspicion. That coupled with the fact that more and more venues are closing their doors for good, makes it almost impossible to find a viable, sizable and realistically affordable venues for shows."*

A House

When the House of Jaahas formed, choosing to name the collective a *house* was kind of an accident. It is not exactly like the original ballroom *houses* — there is no competitive component and most of the drag families in Finland don't live together. It is more referring to the idea of a chosen family and comes from the tradition of drag families, as it came after the Lola Vanilla drag school. "*Are we now the house of Vanilla?" no-one really said anything about that. Lola is our drag mother and a mentor, but the way we deal with her is more sibling-like.*"

L.C.: *"I think most people who come into the scene don't really understand what having or being part of a drag family or house actually means. They think it's a bit of fun, they create a funny or sassy name and then announce their house like it should warrant some sort of respect and adulation. Drag families don't work like that. Drag families are born from a necessity for comfort, longing for family roles that don't exist, trust and respect ...so when a group of say, straight cis women create a house for shits and giggles it spits in the face of the community. Drag houses are actually families, that's why we use titles like mother and sister. We are filling a need that doesn't exist for us naturally as queer people in society.*
Personally it took a long time for me to accept the role of one of the mothers of the scene, Lola being the other mother of the scene. Although I officially only have three drag daughters, I'd say myself and Lola Vanilla have birthed most of the scene. Almost all the major houses have come from Drag Me to Hel in some way, and I'm deeply proud of the legacy we have created."

The concept of a chosen family is crucial for HoJ as well; both within their collective where they are each other's safety network, as well as in the scene as a whole. As Shady explains, many queers in the scene face rejection from their "birth family" on one level or another, thus it is important to offer the possibility for those (family-like) connections, both at the clubs and outside them. When in a role of the producer Shady feels a responsibility to create a home-like atmosphere.

For Shady a huge aspect of what makes queer spaces is refraining from imposing expectations. People are not expected to explain themselves or deliver anything normalized. This emotional care and vulnerability are at the core of the scene.

Safer Space

S.S.: *"With safety and inclusivity you are never ready"*

It has become somewhat of a standard for any queer event (or just any event which aims for inclusivity) to use *safer space* principles. They are included in Facebook events descriptions or hanging on the walls of venues. In some spaces, like Loukko, they have become a permanent feature. Even the new helsinki public library Oodi has them. Notabene Shady Stardust was involved in a preliminary consultation for the safer space principles in Oodi.
During our interview we talked about how it was for them at the beginning of House of Jaahas with safety issues. Founders of the collective were all

veterans of activist cooperation and producing events (active in the music and burlesque scene) and the collective knowledge accumulated through time was the basis for forming strategies towards safety. It came quite naturally at first; for the first *Nights of Jahaas* Shady just wrote the safer space rules based on previous experience, printed it out, posted around the venue and mentioned during hosting. But safer space is constantly modified (addressing feedback) thus on the third Nights of Jaahas in Lepakkomies they arranged the safety people.

A set of rules can be criticized by some, seen as a list of *don'ts*, but as Shady pointed out it is important to remember the rules exist to remove obstacles for people not to constrain them…

S.S.: *"When you come to the space you are automatically creating it"*

In other words; people make space and are responsible for what it is like. This responsibility is a common one and everyone in the club whether it is organizers, performers or the audience shares it.

This non-hierarchical approach is very important for HoJ. While organizing the Drag School they refrained from acting as authority, rather wanted to create an experience together with the participants. And it was an amazing experience for Shady, especially seeing people open up and how huge a difference you can make with making space for people as well as helping them realize that they are allowed to take space.

S.S.: *"Whenever the entrance is more than 20e there will be a problem"*

Financial accessibility is another important part of safety. Many people in the community are poor, some have limited job opportunities due to gender discrimination and transphobia in the job market. And many queers struggle with mental health problems (mostly caused by structural violence & discrimination), which also results in economic consequences. Entry fee for HoJ club is around 10e and it is usually a flexible price so you can pay less if you can't afford it. For more elaborate events like the drag school, which was a series of workshops, the price was higher but payment could be made in installments.
Working on improving safety and accessibility is an ongoing progress.

L.C.: *"My experiences with racism in the scene are vast. I would say that the major thing is that I never truly feel safe or comfortable in the scene or at venues. I won't perform at most venues because of how hostile staff have been towards me because I'm poc. If I'm out of drag I'm often met with hostility, comments, and stares. I'm half Middle Eastern, so people see me as a threat. they see a Middle Eastern man in a queer space and think I'm in the club for dubious reasons, like to prey on people, to steal or perhaps attack them when leaving the venue. Our community still has a long way to go to be racially inclusive.*
That fear and discomfort extends to other producers too. I often feel that if I voice my concerns to white producers about their behaviours that that will cost me bookings for shows. For example there are performers who have culturally appropriative acts but most people can't say anything to them because they have a large following and are white and that gives them power. There are many other problems involving race in the community, and sadly I doubt they will be addressed anytime soon because even in the underground drag scene, the queerest of the queer spaces, it seems safety, inclusiveness, exposure, is a whites first game."

Claiming Spaces

Even though there is somewhat a concentration of queer culture in Kallio for many queer people it is more of a "place to come" rather than a "place to live". This is due to progressing gentrification in the area. Shady moved to Helsinki in 2001, and recalls the gentrification of Kallio started maybe around 10 years ago.

The working-class history of Kallio makes it more resilient to gentrification processes compared to other districts. The area today is still a red-green bubble and somewhat an underground culture centre. However, there is not that much queer culture within it and the pressure of gentrification and inflow of hipsters is getting more visible. This is, as Shady says, due to a certain *"fear of queer city"* in Helsinki.

Most bars in Kallio are in residential buildings, which puts restrictions on evening/nightlife. As Shady points out, residents making complaints and the whole safety aspect definitely speeded up the gentrification process. Some

aspects of safety are improved, like the violence decreases, but it is probably swept away somewhere else.

S.S.: *"Reclaiming space to be safe for 'us'"*

Apart from just being available, Lepakkomies was a good location for another reason. The bar is located right next to Vaasanaukio, often referred to as the "speed square" due to the occuring drug dealing. It is not the safest place for many and especially for people visibly belonging to a minority of any sort. HoJ saw an opportunity for reclaiming the space and making it safer for queer people. At least a few times during a club night a large crowd of queers spilled outside the bar into Helsinkinkatu for a smoke or a breath of fresh air, hence puting many pairs of queer "eyes" watching over the surrounding area.
This temporary claiming of space is important for the scene, but so is continuity. It is one aspect of safety — providing continuous events for the scene, so it won't just disappear suddenly or for a long time.

S.S.: *"A place where straights/tourists would think twice about going in"*

In real life it is the other way around — queer people need to think twice about going somewhere; will it be safe, inclusive and kind? In this place of one's own, "tourists" has a double meaning of regular tourists to the city (a sign of a gentrifying area), but also (unwanted) tourists to the scene.

S.S.: *"I believe in approachability, but for those who need our scene, not for those who just want a freak show. I find many insider scenes uncomfortable and unsafe, we make a point of trying to make our events accessible also socially – for those who would benefit from access to our scene, not privileged straight cis ppl. Those are the tourists we don't welcome."*

L.C.: *"Regarding mainstream vs. underground divide, I'd say that path has been traveled many times. Many attempts have been made to build bridges between us and the mainstream drag groups, but it has always failed. There is a level of toxicity from some of the mainstream that is preventing progress being made, however it is getting better through the actions of producers like Sheila. But, the fact remains, they have louder voices in the broader LGBT+ community, they have more visibility, they're more marketable to cis-het crowds, they have the backing of HeSeta and other organisations and because of that they decide the pace of the progress. We just have to keep providing spaces for outliers of our community and pushing for change in whatever ways we can."*

There will always be a risk of commodification of the scene, as Shady notes. The more the scene grows and the more resources, events, places are involved the more "tourism" in the scene. That is why it is important to be cautious with visibility. If there is only visibility not substantial representation — when you just get to be seen but don't get to say anything, then it is problematic. If it becomes a "freak show" it is problematic. However, of course, representation and even visibility can make an important impact on a very local scale, as it was for Shady and seeing DMTH shows.

L.C.: "*The growth of the scene was slow, we worked hard and for a long time for this scene, often at great personal and emotional expense. I mean I've been doing this for ten years now and Lola for thirteen years. And only in these last few years have we felt that we could take a step back from production work and just enjoy the scene knowing that the scene is in safe hands and that it will continue its ideals of inclusivity, queerness and kindness.*"

4

STREET LIFE

Public displays of affection

Queers, often rejected from the heterosexualized domestic, rely on urban spaces to fulfill their needs for *homeness*. In this essay, on the example of Christophers Street area, I will investigate the externalization of the private, the domestic of queers into the streets — from the erotic, through shaping street sisterhood, to collective fight over the right to the streets.

There has been a spike of interest in cruising culture within architecture praxis, with the most emblematic *Cruising Pavilion* presented as an unofficial part of the Venice Biennale in 2018. Perhaps as a nostalgic attempt to bring back non-digital queer culture. Andres Jaque claims that apps like grindr through the digitalized techno-body — the Alkali-aluminosilicate of the phone screen as smooth as the human skin — contribute to changing not only sex and relationships, but also urbanity *"by enrolling more than 360 million people around the world in a customizable infrastructure where digital self-construction replaces need for physical buildings and intimacy between strangers."*[1]

The erotic has offered a quite illustrative way to talk about bringing "the private" into public and thus blurs the private/public space dichotomy, but *public display of affection* is not limited to the erotic. Queer politics and culture have rather been understood to be produced in traditionally private spaces like homes or bars instead of public spaces.[2] However, analysis of the more complex or nuanced displays, such as expressions of ones' identity, activisms, or to quote Andersson – *"the gender-neutral sisterhood of the street."*[3] – requires breaking the binary of public and private spaces and understanding spaces of streets, bars, homes etc. as an interconnected network through which caring and community is realized in a variety of forms.

Bars have a significant role in queer culture and symbolic status, "*stemming from a long history of vandalism, attacks and regulatory attempts to destroy this economy."*[4] After all, it was yet another police raid on The

1 Andres Jaque, "Grindr Archiurbanism", *LOG* 41, (Fall 2017):78.
2 Ann Forsyth, "Sexuality and Space...", 353-54.
3 Johan Andersson, "*Wilding* in the West Village...", 280.
4 Ibid., 275.

Stonewall Inn gay bar on June 27, 1969 that brought the suppressed queer culture out of the bar into the streets. The Stonewall Revolt happened in New York's West Village and was a three day long riot, which gave momentum to the gay liberation movement in the U.S. The Stonewall events were in large part led by young transwomen of color such as Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson. This is crucial to mention, not only for the sake of Rivera's and Johnson's memory but especially given the current trans-exclusive and racist power dynamic in West Village.

To unpack this dynamic, Johan Andresons analysis of the closing of *Chi Chiz* bar on 135 Christopher Street – the same street which houses the Stonewall Inn – is useful. This was already briefly opened up in the introduction chapter in regards to the dangers of Jacobs "eyes on the street" tactics and the feeling of safety. Chi Chiz bar was closed in January 2011 due to conflicts with the Greenwich Village Block Association and long lasting problems with the NYC police. The initial cause for starting the case against Chi Chiz were a few reported drug deals and a broader issue concerning "appropriate" use of the sidewalks outside the bar. There were no concrete examples of crime happening in the sidewalks outside Chi Chiz, only a repeatedly brought up "disruption" of the area. And this disruption was problematically attached to particular groups and one of the very few Black and Latino establishments on the street:

> *"When one police officer (...) describe[s] how passers-by cross the street to avoid the crowd outside Chi Chiz, they are not actually pointing out any wrongdoing on behalf of the customers, but inadvertently highlighting a tendency among white people to perceive black youths (especially in groups) as threatening."*[5]

The sidewalk outside Chi Chiz becomes an extension of the bar, and the bar is pointed out as the cause of the perceived disruption in public space. The line between public and private becomes blurred and it is impossible to analyze one without considering the other.

5 Johan Andersson, "*Wilding* in the West Village...", 277.

Andersson writes about the crowd outside of Chi Chiz as performatively appropriating the sidewalks. He describes Christopher Street itself as performative; *"not a thoroughfare taking pedestrians from A to B, but a theatrical space to parade up and down."*[6] This brings to mind the previously described ballroom culture. In a way, a "space to parade up and down" is also the ballroom runway – a street produced and/or performed in a safer space of a club. During a *ball,* participants walk categories, either embracing and presenting various identities and expressions or presenting *the realness*, the ability to pass[7], as something from the "straight world". The ballroom runway is constructed as a street – a space of appearance, place of presenting yourself to the community, but also a space that is produced through plural appearances. In that sense, the sidewalk on Christopher Street becomes an extension of that – a space to appear to the city of New York and eventually to the world.

6 Johan Andersson, "*Wilding* in the West Village...", 278.

7 In contemporary discourse within the queer community the idea of "passing" as something to be desired is put into question; it is argued that queers should no longer strive for "fitting in" the heteronormative world, but advocate for their right to be as they are and instead dismantle heteronormative system and its oppression. Additionally, the realness category has been considered problematic due to upholding the gender-binary. See for example https://www.out.com/news-opinion/2017/4/07/be-able-blend-does-realness-still-belong-ballroom.

There is no place like ~~home~~ street

Christopher Street works as a social space for queer youth of color even though the brutal process of gentrification has displaced most of them in terms of resident status. Anderson contextualizes this transformation in New York's neoliberal restructuring since the fiscal crisis of the mid-1970s. This process led to a peculiar situation where the area is a historically significant site and a "second home" to a population, which can not afford to live in it:

> *"At weekends and in the evenings, the area is characterized by a sharp divide between the almost exclusively white and wealthy commercial/ residential realms, and the public spaces predominantly used by black and Latino queer youth."*[8]

The city somewhat recognizes the trans history of the space by changing the name of the Christopher/Hudson street corner to the 'Rivera Way' in 2005 in honor of Sylvia Rivera, for instance. This could be read as a preservation effort, however, in context with other actions, such as a 2009 marketing campaign called 'Rainbow Pilgrimage' seeking to attract LGBTQIA+ tourists to New York during the fortieth anniversary of Stonewall, this may be read, as Anderson suggests, as a tactic to capitalize on the radical legacy of Stonewall. The current forms of police harassment, which strikingly resemble those that triggered the initial Stonewall uprising,[9] put the city's efforts into question even more.

Since the 80s the area of Christopher Street and the Christopher Street Pier – which is a group of piers[10] forming a sort of extension of Christopher Street – went through a massive transformation, which is well captured in this quote from VICE magazine[11]:

8 Johan Andersson, "*Wilding* in the West Village...", 265.

9 Ibid., 266.

10 Those are the piers marked 42, 45, 46 and 51, but sometimes refers to specifically Pier 45.

11 Hugh Ryan "Power in the Crisis: Kia LaBeija's Radical Art as a 25 Year Old, HIV Positive Woman of Color", *Vice*, June 6, 2015, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/nn9bdg/power-in-the-crisis-kia-labeija-456.

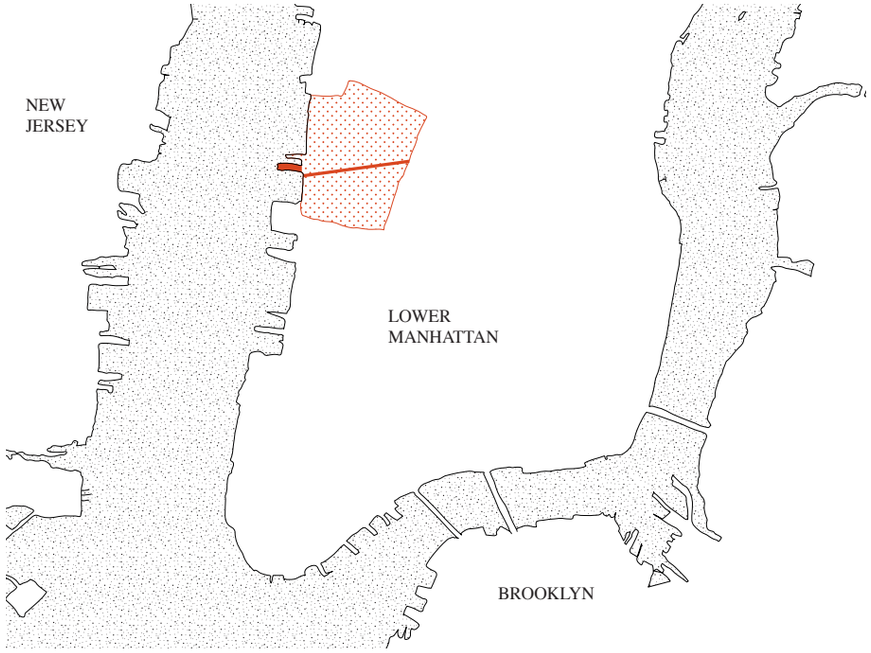

Fig.16. West Village, Christopher's Street and the Piers in the context of New York City.

> *"Thirty years ago, all that was here was cement and skin, cracked pavement and queer brown bodies turning browner in the sun. (...) These days, it's primarily youth of color drawn to the West Village by its reputation, and driven to its outskirts by its residents. (...) this thin strip of former wasteland was once sovereign queer territory. Now it looks like a backyard in Dwell magazine, that kind of modern, Scandin-Asian design that says nothing about where you are, but looks great in photos. It's been barely more than a decade since the city erected a fence and began "cleaning" the area. Gentrification moves fast in Manhattan—now all the traces of the old erotic and artistic cruising ground are gone."*

What is not gone is the affection for the place, exemplified by the actions of an LGBTQIA+ youth of color-led organization FIERCE (Fabulous Independent Educated Radicals for Community Empowerment), founded in the year 2000. FIERCE focuses on building political consciousness and a power base for LGBTQIA+ youth as well as developing their organizing skills. Through grassroots campaigns and building networks, the New York based organization fights police harassment and violence and advocates for increased access to safe public space for LGBTQIA+ youth.[12]

One of their projects was the Safe Spaces Save Lives Campaign, which was launched in 2005 as a response to the refurbishment of the Christopher Street Pier. The Christopher Street Pier was the first in line to be developed under the huge quasi-public park project for the West Side of Manhattan, stretching from Battery Park to 59th Street. The project began in 1998 when New York state formed a private-public partnership under the Hudson River Park Act, and the first pier was closed off for refurbishment in 2002.[13]

The whole Hudson River Park project can be interpreted as a way to "design out" the poorer queer youth of color.[14] As one of the FIERCE activists, Rickke Mananzala, notes, the *"the future development of each pier, (...) is relying mostly on high-end commercial development projects to ensure its completion as a quasi-public park."*[15] The plans for the Hudson River Park were the largest and most expensive park developments in New York since Central Park. Mananzala also points to the "ripe" timing of this project as it further enabled the ongoing shift of housing fabric along the West Side towards more luxury condominiums.[16]

FIERCE recognized that the larger process of revitalizing the area was happening without their consent or even proper knowledge. Certainly without any form of consulting the queer youth who are, as Anderson observed, the primary users of the areas public spaces.

12 http://www.fiercenyc.org/.

13 Rickke Mananzala, "The FIERCE Fight for Power and the Preservation of Public Space in the West Village", *S&F Online*, Issue 10.1-10.2 (Fall 2011/Spring 2012), http://sfonline.barnard.edu/a-new-queer-agenda/the-fierce-fight-for-power-and-the-preservation-of-public-space-in-the-west-village/.

14 Johan Andersson, "*Wilding* in the West Village...", 280.

15 Rickke Mananzala, "The FIERCE Fight...".

16 Ibid.

About the *Safe Space*... campaign FIERCE writes:

> *"In 2003, we saw the direct impact of our absence. The redeveloped piers closed at 1am, which limited access for LGBTQ youth, who often face unsafe environments at home and in school. And this was just the beginning. The Hudson River Park Trust also began charging medical service vans a $25,000 permit fee to park on the pier, and started closing the pier bathrooms early."*[17]

Since the launch of the campaign, the activists were able to negotiate some of the postulates like waving the $25,000 event fee, increased access to bathrooms or stopping the curfew both in the piers as well as Christopher Street.[18] Furthermore, FIERCE continues to campaign for a 24-hour LGBTQIA+ youth centre on Pier 40.

One of the spatial tactics to reclaim Pier 46 used by FIERCE was a public screening of *Paris is Burning,* which was partly shot in the area around Christophers Street and specifically on the piers. This tactic can be read in various ways. The documentary shows queer kinship networks realized in public spaces of the area few decades before. Screening of the film is than a strategy to revoke the memory of the queerstory (queer history) of the space to further justify its queer present. It is like saying "this place was queer and Black and home to us, before it was rich and polished and treated us as intruders". On the other hand, the act of the community gathering and screening a film which is to some extend a representation of themselves is producing the queer space in the present. Despite the erasing pressures, queerness will continue to produce a parallel story or reality of the space.

The fight over Christophers street and the piers is a fight against eviction, which – as Andersson suggests – goes beyond residents rights.[19] The queer youth appropriating the public spaces of West Village continues to queer the space and, by doing so, resists the erasure or whitewashing of West Village's queer history. This erasure, both of the queerstory and queers who

17 http://www.fiercenyc.org/campaigns/safe-spaces-save-lives-campaign.

18 Rickke Mananzala, "The FIERCE Fight...".

19 Johan Andersson, "*Wilding* in the West Village...", 279.

occupy the streets today, is reinforced by labeling them as "transient people" of the area, because they lack resident status.[20] The queer youths' persistent presence in the public spaces of West Village despite the ongoing oppressive efforts of the city, police, and the new waves of gentrifiers, both produces a queerer and safer space and protects the queer history of the place.

Planning behind displacement

What is the wider process behind the brutal displacement of the Black and Latino queer youth from around Christopher's Street and the piers? Andersson contextualizes this *eviction understood beyond residency* in West Village, with a certain vision for the city embodied in the policies and urban redevelopment agenda of Michael Bloomberg who served as New York mayor between 2002-2013. Even though Bloomberg's administration was claiming to be "post-political", his efforts to sanitize the city, fueled by competitiveness for *livability,* cannot be read as other than class-based and political.[21]

Winning livability competition has become a dream of city mayors, and the fight for top places in happiness rankings took a top place in city's agendas.[22] This vision for the city has two components – *creative* and *livable*, respectively propagated by the superstar #urbaninfluencers Richard Florida and Jan Gehl.

In the quest for redeveloping New York's street to be more "livable" and "for people" Bloomberg collaborated with the later – Danish architect and urban design consultant Jan Gehl. Gehl Architects conducted a series of "public life surveys" which, as we read in the "World Class Streets: Remaking New York City's Public Realm" report from the project, *"helped formulate much of the city's strategy for improving streets as public spaces."*[23] The architects starting with questions like "who uses New York street?" identified

20 Johan Andersson, "*Wilding* in the West Village...", 279.

21 Ibid.

22 Maroš Krivý and Leonard Ma, "The Limits of the Livable City: From Homo Sapiens to Homo Cappuccino" *The Avery Review*, March 30, 2018, https://averyreview.com/issues/30/limits-of-the-livable-city#fn:5.

23 Gehl Architects, "World Class Streets: Remaking New York City's Public Realm" (New York City: Department of Transportation, 2007):16.

problems such as overcrowded sidewalks, closed façades, lack of sitting and not enough cafés and concluded the analyzed spots were not child and senior friendly. To combat this they propose amongst other "a visually appealing" and "safe for all" city, where "all" is specified as seniors and students. A few of New York's key public spaces got a radical transformation:

> *"Spaces are reclaimed for pedestrian life and bike lanes are introduced. The city is ready for a new generation of urban spaces for people (...) Throughout this period of transformation, Gehl Architects works with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to promote quality of life and livability in the city, via urban realm recommendations, design guidelines and implementation strategies. The resulting pilot projects offer a more lively, attractive, safe and healthy New York City."*[24]

Gehl's depoliticized urban planning continuously finds the reason for dysfunctioning cities in the legacy of modernist car-oriented planning, while ignoring the urban condition of global capitalism[25], structural racism and patriarchy. At the center of his analysis he puts the normalized, sociable *homo-sapiens* body – class-less, gender-less[26], race-less, "universal" body which will thrive in the urban jungle as long as green, walkable, adjusted to *human scale,* public spaces are provided. Gehl focuses on the *life between buildings* and provides various checklists like "5 rules for designing great cities"[27] or "12 quality criteria concerning the pedestrian landscape"[28] for accessible, healthy and safe public spaces. However, safety, health and accessibility are not neutral categories and detaching life between buildings from the life in them, thus reinforcing the private-public space binary, results in problematic consequences. Giving a face-lift to the public space without considering rise in rents, accessibility of affordable housing and healthcare or educational facilities is a straight road to rapid gentrification and displacements of the

24 https://gehlpeople.com/story-article/new-york-city-ready-for-change/.

25 Maroš Krivý and Leonard Ma, "The Limits of the Livable City...".

26 Even though the Gehl Institute provides tools via which one can measure the woman to men ratio in public spaces, gender is not thoroughly discussed.

27 Constanza Martínez Gaete, "Jan Gehl's 5 Rules for Designing Great Cities," *ArchDaily*, December 16, 2016. https://www.archdaily.com/801431/jan-gehl-5-rules-for-designing-great-cities.

28 Jan Gehl, *Cities for People*, (Island Press, 2010), 239.

poor.

As Susana Torre noticed already in the 90s, the mainstream debate around public spaces focuses almost exclusively on the physical space. She states: *"What is missing from the current debate about the demise of public spaces is the awareness of the loss of architecture's power to represent the public, as living, acting, and self-determining community."*[29]

While Gehl takes inspiration from Jacobs celebration of street life, Richard Florida builds on her vision of cities as economic engines to construct his creative class and cities thesis. In the highly influential *The Rise of the Creative Class,* Florida argued that the young, educated, creative minds fleeing from the suburbs back to the city will transform it into a diverse, vibrant engine of economic success.[30] The "creative class" – made of artists, designers, scientists, writers, media and fashion people, innovators and entrepreneurs; basically everyone whose job involves creative process – according to Florida increasingly favours cities that match their interests and places itself in "creative centres". This makes cities eager to attract the creative talents, thus fueling the rhetoric of urban competitiveness. What was so alluring in Florida's theories was their assumed egalitarian undertone, since the "potential" for creativity not only lies in every human being, but for the ultimate betterment of the cities we should utilize the creativity of everyone. "*We are all creative beings and have the potential to [contribute to] the creative economy*" Florida stated.

Florida argues that the creative class settles in places of the 3Ts of economic development: technology, talent and tolerance. To measure the Ts Florida uses the gay and bohemian indexes – respectively measuring the percentage of same-sex couples in an area and the number of writers, designers, musicians, actors, directors, painters, sculptors, photographers, and dancers in a region.[31] This use of the gay index can be read as appropriating and commodifying "gay culture" for branding purposes.

29 Susana Torre, "Claiming the public space: The mothers of Plaza de Mayo." In *Gender space architecture. An interdisciplinary introduction* edited by Jane Rendell et al. (London: Routledge, 2000):145.

30 Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life.* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

31 Richard Florida, "Cities and the Creative Class", *City & Community* 2:1 (March 2003): 12-13.

In the case of West Village, it is not solely the white affluent gay residents of West Village who are in conflict with the queer youth of color in the area. Since the 90s the neighborhood has been transformed by straight yuppification.[32] Greenwich Village Blocks Association and the Christopher Street Patrol which Andersson identifies as *"the most aggressive neighborhood groups lobbying for the displacement of queer youth of color"* while having gay members are not gay organizations. The straight yuppification in this context can be understood as proto creative class moving back to urban centres. However, the creative class does not make the city more livable, but more segregated by the processes of unification.

> *"The mantra of the creative class transgressive powers became the leading rationale among those who were thinking about and working on city development."*[33]

The "World Class Streets: Remaking New York City's Public Realm" report of Ghel Architects & NYDOT opens with a letter from the mayor. Bloomberg, addressing "dear friends", writes that New York already has the most famous streets in the world and the project aims to make them the most attractive for walking and cycling and the other great New York activity "people-watching".[34] Sounds rather dark having in mind the informal social surveillance which contributes to the further oppression of various already marginalized groups in urban spaces.

32 Johan Andersson, "'Wilding' in the West Village...", 272.

33 Antu Sorainen, "Gentrification in Europe.", 607.

34 Gehl Architects, "World Class Streets...", 2.

Problems with diversity

Positioning a queer body as a recipient of and agent in space reveals that the normalised body from Neufert's handbook or the body of Le Corbusier's l'homme moyen of the Modulor and even Gehl social homo sapiens is not a genderless, featureless, neutral body. It is a reflection of who is shaping and benefiting from the way urban scape is constructed.

Andersson asks; *"What would Jacobs have made of the clientele outside a bar such as Chi Chiz?"*[35] The crowded sidewalks are definitely something she would applaud as a form of natural surveillance. They are also very much producing the "life between buildings" Gehl advocates for, and they are even pumping Florida's "diversity" indexes. Yet somehow in spite of this there is no place for the queer youth in the creative livable city narrative. However, this supposed "diversity" is commodified and capitalized on by the city and city marketers, even if its extent is very limited.

> *"At the root of urban strategies that seek to capitalize on difference is an expectation that diverse identities must be categorizable, stable, and visible: the groups who are the targets of such policies must be simplified into essential, legible categories that are static, knowable, and not too troubling to the "mainstream" consumer."*[36]

The problem with promoting "diversity" is, as the above quote suggests, that various identities are simplified and made into tropes or in worst cases fetishized. The constructed identities are supposed to be easily "assimilable". Those whose identity is not easily commodified and normalized or who do not conform to the codes established in the process of branding diversity, are pushed further into the margins.[37] Additionally, giving such commodified visibility to certain people further strengthens the idea of them as "the other" who needs to be tolerated.

35 Johan Andersson, "*Wilding* in the West Village...", 278.

36 Tiffany Muller Myrdahl, "Queering Creative Cities". In *Queerying Planning: Challenging Heteronormative Assumptions and Reframing Planning Practice*. Edited by Petra L. Doan (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Pub. Co, 2011), 160.

37 Tiffany Muller Myrdahl, "Queering Creative Cities", 163.

Behind the slogans for "diverse, creative neighbourhoods" hides pumping real-estate market value and various livability, creativity and what not indexes (which also pump real-estate market value), all at the expense of most marginalized communities. Further, the narrative of "using diversity as an opportunity" (similarly "using climate change as an opportunity") suggests that something can be accepted or addressed only if we can use it. Perhaps diversity is not a value we should aim to use or create, but rather an existing condition we should accommodate in planning practises.

5

GENTRIFICATION & CLAIMING SPACE

In this essay I will look at different approaches to analyzing urban transformation in relation to queer urban dwellers. At the same time the different approaches show ways of queering the neighbourhood — both via territorialization by dwellers and critical readings.

In the process of gentrification the area gets revitalized, small diverse, independent businesses are replaced with big chains, property values go up and low-income residents are forced out of the area, which somewhere along the way gets homogenized. In that sense gentrification can be read as a process damaging the diversity of urban communities.[1]
When we talk about gentrification it is usually a process applied to the scale of a neighbourhood. In planning practice much focus is put on revitalizing neighbourhoods, on their growth, development or stability etc. It has become a basic building block of modern cities, both for planners and politicians or city marketers. The most common understanding of neighbourhoods is that of 'dominated by residential uses,' 'walkable' in scale, and a (physical) territory.[2]
However, as Jen Gieseking points out: "*it is important to note that producing neighbourhoods depended upon the making of territory and claiming of place, whether by force, coercion, or choice.*"[3]

Further, we need to question the idea that gentrification is a natural process and an effect of cultural and economic change in people's life (the choice of the consumer). Rather, the role of capital investments and rent gaps in gentrification processes must be examined.

1 Antu Sorainen, "Gentrification in Europe. The impact of gentrification on queer communities, focusing on the examples of the Punavuori and Kallio districts in Helsinki, Finland." In *Global Encyclopedia of LGBTQ History*, edited by Howard Chiang et al., 606-612. (Charles Scribner's Sons, 2019), 606.

2 Derek Gregory et al., *The Dictionary of Human Geography*. 5th ed. Malden, (MA: Blackwell, 2009), 494.

3 Jen Jack Gieseking, "Queering the Meaning of *Neighbourhood*", In *Queer Presences and Absences*, edited by Yvette Taylor and Michelle Addison, 178–200. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013):180.

Gaybourhoods

Manuel Castells argues that the reason for the formation of "gaybourhoods" – or geographical concentration of gay culture – is visibility on one hand and protection on the other. He writes about the formation of a gaybourhood as an act of "collective coming out" which shows strength and ability to produce autonomous culture.[4] Castells stresses that gays improved the quality of housing and urban spaces of neighbourhoods in declining conditions leading to the improvement of housing stock and the commercial vitality of such neighbourhoods.[5] He specifically writes about the Castro – a traditional working-class district in San Francisco – where the process of transformation in the 1970s took place through buying or renting homes in a rundown and rehabilitating them by "gay households, gay realtors, and gay renovation companies."[6] Additionally, he points to the politicized character of producing Castro with, for example Harvey Milk addressing issues of local urban policies, such as the control of real estate speculation in his political program in the 70s.[7]

Castells analysis of Castro is almost exclusively focused on gay men. He argues that women's relationships and networks didn't have any serious spatial implications and that it was only men capable of producing physical spaces that formed gaybourhoods.[8] As Jen Gieseking suggests "*such a viewpoint extols the privileged patriarchal arguments of elite capitalist society, wherein property ownership indicates maturity of both individuals and groups.*"[9] In other words, it follows capitalist logic of cultural and economic territorialisation in the form of physical neighbourhoods. The gay neighbourhood has been idealized in research and popular culture as a "safe space" for the LGBTQIA+ community and read as "*a space of liberation, community, and possibility, particularly through the lens of American ideals of ethnic success via territorialisation.*"[10] For Castells this territorialisation or shift towards creating gaybourhoods was a way for gay men too thrive, while urban experiences of lesbians and other queers and particularly the poor and people of color go unnoticed.

4 Manuel Castells, *The power of Identity*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 213.
5 Ibid., 160.
6 Ibid., 215.
7 Ibid., 216.
8 Ibid., 140.
9 Jen Jack Gieseking, "Queering the Meaning of *Neighbourhood*", 181.
10 Ibid.

Brian Godfrey points to different waves of gentrifiers in the gentrification process – "*a successional sequence proceeding through phases of bohemian influx, middle-class transition, and bourgeois consolidation.*"[11] The diverse queer community would be among the "pioneer group" looking for cheap rents, alternative forms of living. They open neighbourhoods for the general middle-class, including more affluent gays and lesbians, finally the upper class moves in. Women and trans people who would be among the early waves of gentrifiers are eventually displaced due to having less economical power.[12] Additionally there is the safety factor, which limits some groups access to public spaces and therefore decreases their visibility.

In 2014 Amin Ghaziani wrote a book titled "There goes the neighbourhood"[13] in which he describes the transformation of gaybourhoods in the U.S.. Such neighbourhoods as Castro, West Village or Chicago's Boystown flourished in the 70s and 80s as a part of a larger cycle of urban renewal efforts in the United States. *"Gentrification then resurged in the late 1990s in a second wave that corresponded with rising home prices, changes in the financing system, and the demolition of public housing. It's inside of this second surge and that's where we also begin to witness pretty significant changes in these gay neighborhoods."*
Those changes made the gaybourhoods more straight, more commercial and more expensive.

To step back from the debates about the demise of gaybourhoods, Max Andrucki opens up the disscussion about how these gaybourhoods were not only grounds for social and political organizing, but how they were/are continuously performed as queer spaces through collective labour of care. He points, that:

> *"collective labor is essential to the constitution not just of gayborhoods but of urban spaces in general, particularly through the way it might unsettle binaries of public and private that constrain our thinking*

11 Brian Godfrey, *Neighborhoods in transition: The making of San Francisco's nonconformist communities.* (Berkeley: University of California Press. 1988).
12 Jen Jack Gieseking, "Queering the Meaning of *Neighbourhood*", 181.
13 Amin Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?*, (Princeton, New Jersey; Oxfordshire, England: Princeton University Press, 2014).

around not just intimacy but caring labor."[14]

On (yet again) the case of Castro, he points how the city digests queer newcomers — where he re-envisions the neighbourhood as a labor-intensive family- and community-making space metabolizing the queer migrant:

> *"Queer labor here is essential to the space of the gay neighborhood (...), as an organism digesting and incorporating queer bodies into the fabric of the home, the street, the neighborhood, the city."*

Scattered patterns

An alternative to the men-centered analysis of the queer neighbourhood as a fixed, physical, and visible territory (such as that of Castells), would be Jen Jack Gieseking's study of Park Slope in Brooklyn – the only lesbian neighbourhood in New York. She proposes a nuanced understanding of formation and meaning of neighbourhood – a queering of the neighbourhood, by which she means that the neighbourhood must be *"rethought against the grain of normative paradigms of property ownership-as-success, in order to address the experiences and concerns of women, working class people, and people of colour."*[15] The study used mental mappings of 47 lesbian and queer women in different ages to reinterpret the ways they find meaning in the space of the lesbian-queer neighbourhood[16]:

> "*the meaning and survival of Park Slope is not predicated on retaining physical territory. Rather, I propose it is derived from the mobile, fragmented, fleeting social, cultural, historic, economic, and political elements of a neighbourhood. Lesbians and queer women continually piece together these elements to claim not only a politics of visibility but also a politics of and space for recognition.*"[17]

14 Max Andrucki, "Queering Social Reproduction, or, How Queers Save the City."

15 Jen Jack Gieseking, "Queering the Meaning of *Neighbourhood*", 179-180.

16 Gieseking uses the term "lesbian-queer neighbourhood" to include the identities of the participants of her study, and considers her analysis as an act of queering the neighbourhood.

17 Jen Jack Gieseking, "Queering the Meaning of *Neighbourhood*", 179-180.

Tracing back the history of Park Slope: the population changes in the area in the second half of the 20th century follow a common pattern of many U.S. and European neighbourhoods. In the process of post-war suburbanization much of the upper-middle-class fled from Park Slope, opening up the area for the working-class Italian and Irish and later in the 70s Black and Latino population. In the 90s and especially 2000s the area went through a rapid gentrification and whitewashing process, similar to this in West Village and many other gaybourhoods. Additionally, in the process of renovating brownstones since the 70s, there has been a transformation in the fabric of the houses from rooming houses to single and two-family homes. Park Slope went from being mainly working class Black and Puerto Rican neighbourhood, with a significant lesbian population to white upper-middle class, where sexualities go unnoticed or unrecognised.[18] However, the idea of Park Slope being seen as a lesbian neighbourhood persisted in different ways and depended on various factors throughout the years. In the 70s and 80s despite the unsafety of public spaces due to for example crack epidemic Park Slope still offered "the promise of a lesbian community" that couldn't be found elsewhere. This idea, in one way, was and to a lesser extend still is depended on certain material manifestations of lesbian life that were far more concentrated in Park Slope than rest of New York. Those materialities came in the forms of bars, lesbian/women's bookstore, Lesbian History Archives, etc. The 70s and 80s in the U.S. (but it is also true for Europe) was a peak of women- and lesbian-oriented businesses (book stores, coffee houses, and women-run garages), which were kind of "alternative" to typical businesses as they were more interested in providing community services than making money.[19] Since then more and more places like that shut down or were replaced by lesbian- or queer- friendly spaces instead of specifically queer. *"At the same time, more wild styles, looks, and appearances have been absorbed by hipster chic while Pride flags have become passé. What is LGBTQ is now often illegible in the White, middle class rhetoric of politically correct liberalism."*[20]

In Gieseking's findings, the significance of Park Slope as a queer-lesbian neighbourhood also depended on age or generation of the participants of the

18 Jen Jack Gieseking, "Queering the Meaning of *Neighbourhood*", 186.

19 Ann Forsyth, "Sexuality and Space: Nonconformist Populations and Planning Practice", 351.

20 Jen Jack Gieseking, "Queering the Meaning of *Neighbourhood*", 187-188.

study. The older generations, who "came out" in the 80s had more attachment to the area then those who "came out" after 2000. Noone from the later group mentioned living in Park Slope or spending the majority of their time there, however all participants visited Park Slope either to walk around a queer space for women or for social gatherings, events in bars and restaurants. That was especially true during their coming out process.[21]

In the process of the mainstream culture shifting towards greater acceptance of LGBTQIA+ people, some of the white upper-middle class women assimilate easily in contemporary Park Slope. However, the need for "*a place of their own to buffer against the vast levels of non-acceptance still remains*" for especially women from older generations, working-class and women of color. Many participants of colour stated they while they can express their queerness more freely within the area despite class and race, they still don't feel like they fully belonged.[22]

> "*The history of the pricing out of poor lesbians of colour is always overlooked for the sake of claiming an LGBTQ haven. This denial allows lesbians and queer women to live in the projection of the imagined Park Slope while recognition, representation, and redistribution are so vastly lacking.*"[23]

This is again – as in the case of West Village – a process of assimilating certain queer subject, however it happens at the expense of the most marginalized, poor, working-class, queers of color. As Gieseking suggests, "*LGBTQ marker became more a tool to commodify, sexualise, and fetishise LGBTQ people and their interests rather than support social change for LGBTQ people.*"[24]

Further, Gieseking's participants often questioned the idea of territory-making and claiming of space within feminist and/or queer politics. While they expressed desire for places they could call their own, *"the likening of territorialisation to a practice of physical, patriarchal colonisation repeated*

21 Jen Jack Gieseking, "Queering the Meaning of *Neighbourhood*", 186-88.
22 Ibid., 189.
23 Ibid., 190.
24 Ibid., 194.

many participants' desires to not produce the kind of exclusive spaces from which they themselves had been rejected."[25]

Park Sloped is produced as a queer/lesbian neighbourhood by everyday life of queer and lesbian people, but this process is unstable as the different queer bodies navigate sexism, racism and homophobia. Therefore the idea of the neighbourhood as a fixed space needs to be questioned;

> *"It is not lesbians and queer women who needs to change their practices or understandings of their space to 'claim' it, but that the definition of neighbourhoods must be queered to account for these women's experiences."*[26]

Two cities

Antu Sorainen points out how there are pairs of formerly mixed-class or working-class neighbourhoods in major American and European (including Nordic cities), where in one of them the gentrification process started in the 80s and in the other in the 90s. It is for example San Francisco's Mission and Castro or New York's Lower East Side and Williamsburg areas, as well as Hornstull and Skanstull in Stockholm's Södermalm or Nørrebro and Vesterbro in Copenhagen. In Helsinki it is Punavuori and Kallio.[27]

The historical and geopolitical context of Finland is unique in the sense that up until the 1960s Finland was a rather poor, agrarian country and as Sorainen suggests "*an inclusive, desirable, sexually diverse city life*" was a vision that appeared on the public forum only in the 1980s.[28]

Going deeper into the two neighbourhoods; Sorainen frames Punavuori as the "*more 'respectable' gay and lesbian area*" and Kallio as "*the rougher queer district*"[29], or respectively liberally gay and practically queer.

25 Jen Jack Gieseking, "Queering the Meaning of *Neighbourhood*", 193.
26 Ibid., 195-96.
27 Antu Sorainen, "Gentrification in Europe.", 608.
28 Ibid., 608-609.
29 Ibid., 609.

Since the 50s, Punavuori was home to variety of queer and other "urban underworlds", including sex trade, drug dealers or gay mens cruising sites like tea rooms ("cottages"). In the imagination of bourgeoisie, it functioned as an unknown, dangerous peripheral area of the city,[30] up until *"the 1980s facelift brought in new business money as well as commercial artists and architects, which ironically narrowed the possibilities for interclass connections and networking in an increasingly homogenous social grouping."*[31] Additionally, Sorainen links development of Punavuori's gay scene to the boom of consumerist culture.[32] Punavuori's shifts within the LGBTQIA+ population to some extent follows the gentrification pattern pointed by many scholars; where lesbians are pushed out from areas they can't afford (due to lower income for women; all women/or non-men households) so they settle in a "cheaper" area, where gay men follow and start commercial gay business. Finally, comes the straight clientele bringing raised prices and heteronormative attitudes[33] which eventually forces the lesbian (and arguably trans and gender non-conforming) crowd out. Sorainen notes that lesbian communes were created in the early 80s in Punavuori, together with the first, semi commercial locale (*Gay Gambrini*) established by Seta[34] in 1984, which was followed by commercial gay bars. Since the mid-80s Punavuori experienced a rapid influx of capital and investments brought by straight yuppification as well as the more well-off gays, which has gradually sanitized the area, leaving non-conforming queer identities in the margins.[35]

Following the rapid gentrification of Punavuori, queer and other outcasted crowd started moving to Kallio. The working-class history of Kallio is an important part of why the gentrification process unfolds differently there:

> "*in Kallio, the early twentieth-century Finnish working-class movement's political organization entailed a certain requirement for working-class sexual "decency" and self-maintenance, and as a proxy, the area was associated with less commercial queer visibility that provided, again paradoxically, more interclass contacts and less identity- and class-based social grouping until first decades of the twenty-first century."*[36]

30 Antu Sorainen, "Two Cities of Helsinki? One Liberally Gay and One Practically Queer?", In *Queer Cities, Queer Cultures. Europe since 1945,* edited by Matt Cook and Jennifer Evans, 211-239. (London: Continuum, 2014): 224.

31 Antu Sorainen, "Gentrification in Europe.", 609.

32 Antu Sorainen, "Two Cities of Helsinki?...", 219.

33 Antu Sorainen, "Gentrification in Europe.", 609.

34 Seta – Seksuaalinen Tasavertaisuus / "sexual equality".

35 Antu Sorainen, "Two Cities of Helsinki?...", 224.

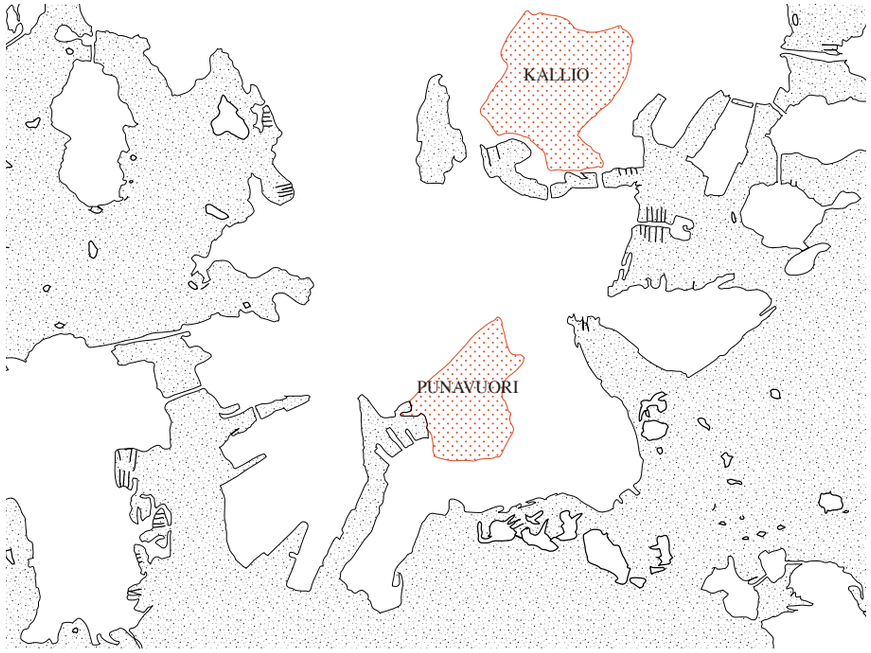

Fig.17. Kallio & Punavuori in Helsinki context.

The working class history impacted the urban fabric as well with small flats; typical one room with kitchenette, less than 30m2, which were until the 60s usually occupied by multiple families.
Additionally, the area is slightly separated from the commercial or bourgeois centre by water.

Due to its working class history and political significance (housing headquarters of workers unions or left-wing parties) Kallio is somewhat more resilient to the pressure to gentrify, but is not fully immune to the process,

36 Antu Sorainen, "Gentrification in Europe.", 609.

and especially in the recent decade effects of that can be seen. For example, a significant lesbian bar Nalle Pub, which opened in 1994 had to shut down in 2013.[37]

Both in Kallio, as well as Punavuori the lesbian and queer bars, cafés, art spaces and bookshops, are being replaced by "straight" establishments and the individual experiences of discrimination in those places alienate nonconforming queer people. They must either conform or be excluded. Money then becomes a key enabler to assimilation. As Sorainen points out, in those hip places "money buys respect".

> *"Younger, affluent, white lesbians and gay men might feel that they do not need specific queer sites anymore because they can have their lattes and dry Rieslings in the trendy, hipster cafes and bars that, on the surface, promise a relaxed urban attitude to the diversity of genders and sexualities. However, many not-so-well-off, not-so-young, not-gender-conforming, or too-political lesbians and other queer people have noticed that this liberal promise is often almost aggressively heteronormative."*[38]

Both Punavuori and Kallio *"have been crucial to the genesis of ideas of lesbian, gay, and transgender identities in the city, to promoting the visibility of the LGBTQ community, and to making people aware of the nonheterosexual history and present of Helsinki."*[39] However, the two districts produced and were produced through different gay/queer identities. While Punavuori through its "*liberal but commodified mainstream gay scene*" appeal to the individual, Kallio with its working-class roots and political history, "*has offered cheap rents and interclass, cross-gendered queer comradeship not only for radically political, but also for the closeted, poor, and untrendy*."[40] With more brutal gentrification process, Sorainen also notes a movement of queer establishments from Kallio to Vallila – less gentrified and more affordable area.

37 Antu Sorainen, "Gentrification in Europe.", 610.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.

The city-wide gentrification pressures put on queers are not left without resistance. There is a development of a perhaps less visible, underground queer scene, which takes place in private apartments or in temporary rented spaces etc. Like *The Attic Underground*, a queer "salon" organized in Katajanoka in a private apartment or various *Underground Drag* clubs organized in bar basements in Kallio and Punnavuori. Additionally the quest to find a continuity and a place of one's own results in claiming new spaces. An example of this would be the *Loukko Center of Subcultures*. Although it is not exclusively LGBTQIA+ space, it offers a safer, financially accessible space of possibility for diverse marginalized groups.

The radical queer vs. assimilationist gay is also a binary construct that, although offers critique to some of the ways queer culture is commodified under neoliberalism, there is a danger to fall into another binary that will not only reinforce the status quo, but perhaps is needed for maintaining it.

***

While accounting for diverse experiences of neighbourhoods would force us to avoid an approach based on territorialisation of urban space, stating there is no need for visible queer urban culture is dangerous. As long as homophobia and other systems of oppressions exist, there will be a need for places for collective organizing and support.

Accepting the diverse urban realities that co-exist in the city can help us form a queerer approach to developing neighbourhoods. One that abandons the homogenized quest for finding/strengthening "identity" of a place and rather focuses on redistributing and protecting urban resources.

CONCLUSIONS:

IN SEARCH OF CONTINUITY

The city is a landscape of struggles and fantasies.

On one hand, intensified power struggles make the city a landscape of constant oppression. On the other, the city is a landscape where the most impactful level of queer solidarity and communality can be achieved. Queers navigate between these struggles and fantasies. They(we) reproduce urban queerness through a myriad of spaces, creating safer escape-places for queers to regain strength; they(we) create shelters where one can take a break from the everyday struggle of urban life in a patriarchal capitalist city. A queer club can work as a *"heterotopian space of refuge"*[1]; realizing the value of "family" support or (public) group therapy in urban spaces. Safety and memory (or remembrance) become urban commons sustained through collective labour of care. The queer urban struggle is not only a struggle for space but also *continuity*. As Shady Stardust underlined during our interview, continuity is a crucial part of safety; safety in knowing that the scene won't just disappear. This continuity is constantly disrupted by gentrification processes. The promise of more and more accepting society fails the most marginalized. But queer resists, and it does this by reclaiming spaces, finding and occupying new spaces and creating institutions documenting and protecting queer urban life.

Weather through the externalization of domestic or making urban spaces feel like home, *queering space* brakes, merges and shuffles around the private and the public. Through that it poses a challenge to a normative classification of spaces as well as their value and confinement. It disrupts the urban order.

Queering can take different forms. It can be a critical reading of an existing space. It can be a subversive action; using a heteronormatively coded space in a queer way, adapting the space, finding a crack in the system. Queering is using the liminal, in-between, insignificant spaces and making them our own.

Ultimately — although that poses the biggest challenge — I believe queering could be adapted as an urban (planning) strategy.

1 Burroughs, Brady et al. "Between Delft and Stockholm." *FOOTPRINT* 21, (december 2017):119-128. Accessed 11 December 2018. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7480/footprint.11.2.1905.

On an abstract level it is a strategy of fluidity, of recognizing the dynamic character of the city. A strategy of questioning the territorialization of city space and rather than trying to make everything neat and contained, accommodating the complexity of various forms of being in the city. It is a strategy of diversification and fragmentation and of decentralization and transing binaries.

Queering is a strategy of negotiation and navigating conflicts.

This strategy reveals a rather difficult task for architects — to approach something so dynamic and easily shifted as power relations and conflicts in urban space within a discipline which essentially aims to create solid, permanent structures. Here architecture can learn from queer theory. As the capacity to adapt and change, rooted in the matter of survival, has been a central aspect of queer theory.

As Éloise Choquette notes, *"comprehending architecture as something global, that includes both the material and immaterial qualities of space, becomes paramount to its evolution, survival and endurance as a meaningful tool of transformation."*[2]

On a practical level, there is a bigger question of what is the actual agency of an architect or planner, or how much can one influence. It is important to recognize what action can be done within a project or process. It is equally important to question the bigger picture, as it is to take practical steps towards a more accessible city. These steps can vary from including gender neutral bathrooms in public buildings and diversifying apartment layouts to bigger planning decisions like protecting historical queer sites. Perhaps it is not making master bedrooms in part of the apartments (or none?), or making LGBTQIA+ shelters in central districts. It can mean developing an area starting with affordable housing or putting a price limit on rental commercial spaces. Or maybe we start making queer housing coops and queer archives, and protect small, diverse businesses. And the most radical of them all — do nothing. Leave some areas untouched for a while.

2 Éloise Choquette, "Queering Architecture: (Un)Making Places."

Whater action we can undertake within our agency, perhaps the core of queering is doing this the non-normative way, advocating for the minority. A queering of architecture — to paraphrase Éloise Choquette — would be resisting architecture as a means of oppression and reclaiming space as a means of liberation.[3]

Finally, *The City* is simultaneously a reflection of society and a platform, an attempt to remake the world. Thus the image of the city, the fantasy of the city is not only a powerful tool — which should be considered a part of the right to the city — but it also contains the reflection on what kind of society we want, what kind of people we want in our city. Language is power, especially for professionals who work with (and through) visions and imaginaries. Thus, when using phrases like "livability" and "city for all" we should be certain it is not just another disguise for a brutal capitalistic urban fantasy.

In a queer urban fantasy a "city for all" would mean that everybody can find a place(s) of one's own and feel safe travelling to and around them.

3 Éloise Choquette, "Queering Architecture: (Un)Making Places."

AFTERWORD

I am finishing my text in the spring of 2020 during the outburst of a pandemic. It is hard to fully embrace writing about the consequences of COVID-19, because it is really impossible to know how long, severe and broad will this crisis be. However, as my thesis is about (queer) urban *communality*, it is hard not to somehow reflect on what does it mean in the times of quarantinnes, social distancing, self-isolations and lockdowns.

There is a dichotomy of professionals working from home, who can post self-care routines on instagram stories showcasing how they manage through the boredom and isolation of social distancing, contrasting the (usually) low-paid workers, who cannot afford to stay home. Either by choice — because without any legal protection, not getting the next paycheck becomes a bigger threat than a virus — or because they are considered *essential workers*. This essential worker category obviously contains medical staff, but also kindergarten workers, elderly-care, post-officers, supermarket staff, pharmacists, garbage-collectors, cleaners, etc. Basically, all the people who perform the broad, and necessary for sustaining our cities, *labour of care*. And while borders remain closed for most of us, one of the few exceptions are charter flights with workers from Eastern Europe,[1] whose labour is necessary for sustaining health care and food sectors.
It becomes very clear what is the labour that makes our urban communities "tick".

From a domestic side of it all; homelessness, impossible rents, threads of eviction gain another cruel dimension. Additionally housing security is not simply having a house or affording to rent one, as countless domestic abuse victims are locked 24/7 with their oppressors…

1 Daria Krivonos, "Ukrainian farm workers and Finland's regular army of labour", *Raster,* 30 April 2020.
https://raster.fi/2020/04/30/ukrainian-farm-workers-and-finlands-regular-army-of-labour/?fbclid=IwAR1mgoighXoU3c7rICZpq44dsMXjWWRKySV_vSPGnEnbCK1C8-_yEG1LwGA#more-1037

The pandemic has highlighted and amplified some of the urban inequalities, but those urban struggles are the same, which minorities and oppressed groups have to deal with every day; medical racism, lack of space, lack of home, food shortage, making it work, trying to survive, taking care of eachother, taking care of others for close-to-zero recognition, right-wing governments trying to pass sexist, transphobic, barbaric laws under the guise of a crisis, restricted movement, closed borders, etc. etc… to name a few.

And in this situation, as in any other, when the state and the structures in place fails, it is up to self-organized urban communities to do the job of taking care of everyone.

After this whole exhausing, but rewarding process I have a better idea how to combine my struggle as an urban queer with my agency and responisibility of an architect.
Perhaps I will not manage to fulfill all of my queer urban fantasies, or it will take decades of hard work to make just one come true.
In any case, I hope that during the times of struggle, and the times when I need to dive into a fantasy, the city will always offer some underground queer club to take care of me.

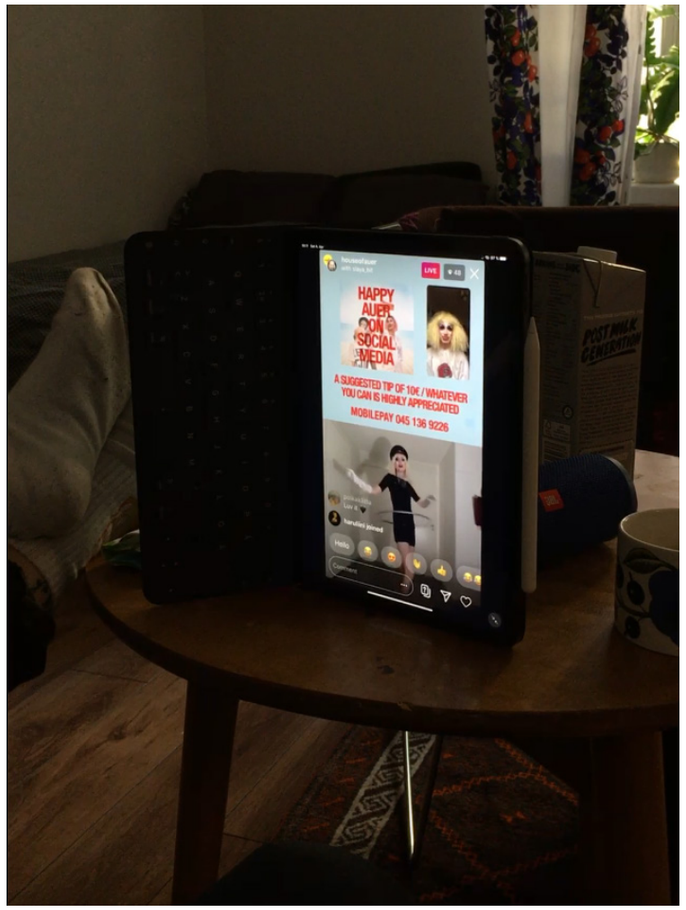

Fig.18. *Me and my queer fam watching an underground drag show on instagram live during the CO-VID19 pandemic.*
April 2020.

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THANK YOU.